THE COLLECTED ESSAYS & ADDRESSES

OF THE

RT. HON. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

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AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

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WILLIAM HAZLITT

1892

FOR an author to fare better dead than alive is good proof of his literary vivacity and charm. The rare merit of Hazlitt's writing was recognised in his lifetime by good judges, but his fame was obscured by the unpopularity of many of his opinions, and the venom he was too apt to instil into his personal reminiscences. He was not a safe man to confide in. He had a forked crest which he sometimes lifted. Because they both wrote essays and were fond of the Elizabethans, it became the fashion to link Hazlitt's name with Lamb's. To be compared with the incomparable is hard fortune. Hazlitt suffered by the comparison, and consequently his admirers, usually in those early days men of keen wits and sharp tongues, grew angry, and infused into their just eulogiums too much of Hazlitt's personal bitterness, and too little of his wide literary sympathies.

But this period of obscurity is now over. No really good thing once come into existence and remaining so is ever lost to the world. This is most comfortable doctrine, and true besides. In the long run the world's taste is infallible. All it requires is time. How easy it is to give it that!

Is substantial injustice at this moment done to a single English writer of prose or verse who died prior to the 1st of January, 1801? Is there a single bad author of this same class who is now read? Both questions may be truthfully answered by a joyful shout of No! This fact ought to make the most unpopular of living authors the sweetest-tempered of men. The sight of your rival clinging to the cob he has purchased and maintains out of the profits of the trashiest of novels should be pleasant owing to the reflection that both rival and cob are trotting to the same pit of oblivion.

But humorous as is the prospect of the coming occultation of personally disagreeable authors, the final establishment of the fame of a dead one is a nobler spectacle.

William Hazlitt had to take a thrashing from life. He took it standing up like a man, not lying down like a cur; but take it he had to do. He died on September 18th, 1830, tired out, discomfited, defeated. Nobody reviewing the facts of his life can say that it was well spent. There is nothing in it of encouragement. He reaped what he sowed, and it proved a sorry harvest. When he lay dying he wanted his mother brought to his side, but she was at a great distance, and eighty-four years of age, and could not come. Carlyle in his old age, grim, worn, and scornful, said once, sorrowfully enough, "What I want is a mother." It is indeed an excellent relationship.

But though Hazlitt got the worst of it in his personal encounter with the universe, he nevertheless managed to fling down before he died what will suffice to keep his name alive. You cannot

kill merit. We are all too busily engaged struggling with dullness, our own and other people's, and with ennui; we are far too much surrounded by would-be wits and abortive thinkers, ever to forget what a weapon against weariness lies to our hand in the works of Hazlitt, who is as refreshing as cold water, as grateful as shade.

His great charm consists in his hearty reality. Life may be a game, and all its enjoyments counters, but Hazlitt, as we find him in his writings—and there is now no need to look for him anywhere else—played the game and dealt out the counters like a man bent on winning. He cared greatly about many things. His admiration was not extravagant, but his force is great; in fact, one may say of him as he said of John Cavanagh, the famous fives player, "His service was tremendous." Indeed, Hazlitt's whole description of Cavanagh's play reminds one of his own literary method:

> His style of play was as remarkable as his power of execution. He had no affectation, no trifling. He did not throw away the game to show off an attitude or try an experiment. He was a fine, sensible, manly player, who did what he could, but that was more than anyone else could even affect to do. His blows were not undecided and ineffectual, lumbering like Mr. Wordsworth's epic poetry, nor wavering like Mr. Coleridge's lyric prose, nor short of the mark like Mr. Brougham's speeches, nor wide of it like Mr. Canning's wit, nor foul like the *Quarterly*, nor *let* balls like the *Edinburgh Review*.

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Brougham, Canning! was ever a fives player so described before? What splendid reading it makes! but we quote it for the purpose of applying its sense to Hazlitt himself. As Cavanagh played, so Hazlitt wrote.

He is always interesting, and always writes about really interesting things. His talk is of

poets and players, of Shakespeare and Kean, of Fielding and Scott, of Burke and Cobbett, of prize fights and Indian jugglers. When he condescends to the abstract, his subjects bring an appetite with them. The Shyness of Scholars, the Fear of Death, the Identity of an Author with his Books, Effeminacy of Character, the Conversation of Lords, On Reading New Books: the very titles make you lick your lips.

Hazlitt may have been an unhappy man, but he was above the vile affectation of pretending to see nothing in life. Had he not seen Mrs. Siddons, had he not read Rousseau, had he not worshipped Titian in the Louvre?

No English writer better pays the debt of gratitude always owing to great poets, painters, and authors than Hazlitt; but his is a manly, not a maudlin, gratitude. No other writer has such gusto as he. The glowing passage in which he describes Titian's *St. Peter Martyr* almost recalls the canvas uninjured from the flames which have since destroyed it. We seem to see the landscape background, "with that cold convent spire rising in the distance amidst the blue sapphire mountains and the golden sky." His essay on Sir Walter Scott and the *Waverley Novels* is the very best that has ever been written on that magnificent subject.

As a companion at the Feast of Wits commend us to Hazlitt, and as a companion for a fortnight's holiday commend us to the admirable selection recently made from his works, which are numerous —some twenty volumes—by Mr. Ireland, and published at a cheap price by Messrs. F. Warne

and Co. The task of selection is usually a thankless one. It involves of necessity omission and frequently curtailment. It is annoying to look in vain for some favourite passage, and your annoyance prompts the criticism that a really sound judgment would have made room for what you miss. We lodge no complaint against Mr. Ireland. Like a wise man, he has allowed to himself ample space, and he has compiled a volume of 510 closely though well-printed pages, which has only to be read in order to make the reader well acquainted with an author whom not to know is a severe mental deprivation.

Mr. Ireland's book is a library in itself, and a marvellous tribute to the genius of his author. It seems almost incredible that one man should have said so many good things. It is true he does not go very deep as a critic, he does not see into the soul of the matter as Lamb and Coleridge occasionally do—but he holds you very tight—he grasps the subject, he enjoys it himself and makes you do so. Perhaps he does say too many good things. His sparkling sentences follow so quickly one upon another that the reader's appreciation soon becomes a breathless appreciation. There is something almost uncanny in such sustained cleverness. This impression, however, must not be allowed to remain as a final impression. In Hazlitt the reader will find trains of sober thought pursued with deep feeling and melancholy. Turn to the essays, *On Living to One's Self*, *On Going a Journey*, *On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth*, and read them over again. When you have done so you will be indisposed to consider

their author as a mere sayer of good things. He was much more than that. One smiles when, on reading the first Lord Lytton's *Thoughts on the Genius of Hazlitt*, the author of *Eugene Aram* is found declaring that Hazlitt "had a keen sense of the Beautiful and the Subtle; and what is more, he was deeply imbued with sympathies for the Humane"; but when Lord Lytton proceeds, "Posterity will do him justice," we cease to smile, and handling Mr. Ireland's book, observe with deep satisfaction, "It has."

CHARLES LAMB[1]

1887

MR. WALTER BAGEHOT preferred Hazlitt to Lamb, reckoning the former much the greater writer. The preferences of such a man as Bagehot are not to be lightly disregarded, least of all when their sincerity is vouched for, as in the present case, by half a hundred quotations from the favoured author. Certainly no writer repays a literary man's devotion better than Hazlitt, of whose twenty seldom-read volumes hardly a page but glitters with quotable matter; the true ore, to be had for the cost of cartage. You may live like a gentleman for a twelvemonth on Hazlitt's ideas. Opinions, no doubt, differ as to how many quotations a writer is entitled to, but, for my part, I like to see an author leap-frog into his subject over the back of a brother.

I do not remember whether Bagehot has anywhere given his reasons for his preference—the open avowal whereof drove Crabb Robinson well-nigh distracted; and it is always rash to find reasons for a faith you do not share; but probably they partook of the nature of a complaint that Elia's treatment of men and things (meaning by things, books) is often fantastical, unreal, even a shade insincere; whilst Hazlitt always at least aims at

[1] *The Works of Charles Lamb.* Edited, with notes and introduction, by the Rev. Alfred Ainger. Three volumes. London, 1883–5.

the centre, whether he hits it or not. Lamb dances round a subject; Hazlitt grapples with it. So far as Hazlitt is concerned, doubtless this is so; his literary method seems to realise the agreeable aspiration of Mr. Browning's *Italian in England*:

> I would grasp Metternich until
> I felt his red wet throat distil
> In blood thro' these two hands.

Hazlitt is always grasping some Metternich. He said himself that Lamb's talk was like snap-dragon, and his own "not very much unlike a game of nine-pins." Lamb, writing to him on one occasion about his son, wishes the little fellow a "smoother head of hair and somewhat of a better temper than his father"; and the pleasant words seem to call back from the past the stormy figure of the man who loved art, literature, and the drama with a consuming passion, who has described books and plays, authors and actors, with a fiery enthusiasm and reality quite unsurpassable, and who yet, neither living nor dead, has received his due meed of praise. Men still continue to hold aloof from Hazlitt, his shaggy head and fierce scowling temper still seem to terrorise, and his very books, telling us though they do about all things most delightful —poems, pictures, and the cheerful playhouse— frown upon us from their upper shelf. From this it appears that would a genius ensure for himself immortality, he must brush his hair and keep his temper; but alas! how seldom can he be persuaded to do either. Charles Lamb did both; and the years as they roll do but swell the rich revenues of his praise.

Lamb's popularity shows no sign of waning.

Even that most extraordinary compound, the rising generation of readers, whose taste in literature is as erratic as it is pronounced; who have never heard of James Thomson who sang *The Seasons* (including the pleasant episode of Musidora bathing), but understand by any reference to that name only the striking author of *The City of Dreadful Night*; even these wayward folk—the dogs of whose criticism, not yet full grown, will, when let loose, as some day they must be, cry "havoc" amongst established reputations—read their Lamb, letters as well as essays, with laughter and with love.

If it be really seriously urged against Lamb as an author that he is fantastical and artistically artificial, it must be owned he is so. His humour, exquisite as it is, is modish. It may not be for all markets. How it affected the Scottish Thersites we know only too well,—that dour spirit required more potent draughts to make him forget his misery and laugh. It took Swift or Smollett to move his mirth, which was always, three parts of it, derision. Lamb's elaborateness, what he himself calls his affected array of antique modes and phrases, is sometimes overlooked in these strange days, when it is thought better to read about an author than to read him. To read aloud *The Praise of Chimney Sweepers* without stumbling, or halting, not to say mispronouncing, and to set in motion every one of its carefully-swung sentences, is a very pretty feat in elocution, for there is not what can be called a natural sentence in it from beginning to end. Many people have not patience for this sort of thing; they like to laugh and move

on. Other people again like an essay to be about something really important, and to conduct them to conclusions they deem worth carrying away. Lamb's views about indiscriminate almsgiving, so far as these can be extracted from his paper *On the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis*, are unsound, whilst there are at least three ladies still living (in Brighton) quite respectably on their means, who consider the essay entitled *A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People* improper. But, as a rule, Lamb's essays are neither unsound nor improper; none the less they are, in the judgment of some, things of naught—not only lacking, as Southey complained they did, "sound religious feeling," but everything else really worthy of attention.

To discuss such congenital differences of taste is idle; but it is not idle to observe that when Lamb is read, as he surely deserves to be, as a whole—letters and poems no less than essays—these notes of fantasy and artificiality no longer dominate. The man Charles Lamb was far more real, far more serious despite his jesting, more self-contained and self-restrained than Hazlitt, who wasted his life in the pursuit of the veriest will-o'-the-wisps that ever danced over the most miasmatic of swamps, who was never his own man, and who died, like Brian de Bois-Guilbert, "the victim of contending passions." It should never be forgotten that Lamb's vocation was his life. Literature was but his by-play, his avocation in the true sense of that much-abused word. He was not a fisherman but an angler in the lake of letters; an author by chance and on the sly. He had

a right to disport himself on paper, to play the frolic with his own fancies, to give the decalogue the slip, whose life was made up of the sternest stuff, of self-sacrifice, devotion, honesty, and good sense.

Lamb's letters from first to last are full of the philosophy of life; he was as sensible a man as Dr. Johnson. One grows sick of the expressions, "poor Charles Lamb," "gentle Charles Lamb," as if he were one of those grown-up children of the Leigh Hunt type, who are perpetually begging and borrowing through the round of every man's acquaintance. Charles Lamb earned his own living, paid his own way, was the helper, not the helped; a man who was beholden to no one, who always came with gifts in his hand, a shrewd man capable of advice, strong in counsel. Poor Lamb indeed! Poor Coleridge, robbed of his will; poor Wordsworth, devoured by his own *ego*; poor Southey, writing his tomes and deeming himself a classic; poor Carlyle, with his nine volumes of memoirs, where he

> Lies like a hedgehog rolled up the wrong way,
> Tormenting himself with his prickles—

call these men poor, if you feel it decent to do so, but not Lamb, who was rich in all that makes life valuable or memory sweet. But he used to get drunk. This explains all. Be untruthful, unfaithful, unkind; darken the lives of all who have to live under your shadow, rob youth of joy, take peace from age, live unsought for, die unmourned, —and remaining sober you will escape the curse of men's pity, and be spoken of as a worthy person. But if ever, amidst what Burns called "social

noise," you so far forget yourself as to get drunk, think not to plead a spotless life spent with those for whom you have laboured and saved; talk not of the love of friends or of help given to the needy; least of all make reference to a noble self-sacrifice passing the love of women, for all will avail you nothing. You get drunk,—and the heartless and the selfish and the lewd crave the privilege of pitying you, and receiving your name with an odious smile. It is really too bad.

The completion of Mr. Ainger's edition of Lamb's works deserves a word of commemoration. In our judgment it is all an edition of Lamb's works should be. Upon the vexed question, nowadays so much agitated, whether an editor is to be allowed any discretion in the exclusion from his edition of the rinsings of his author's desk, we side with Mr. Ainger, and think more nobly of the editor than to deny him such a discretion. An editor is not a sweep, and, by the love he bears the author whose fame he seeks to spread abroad, it is his duty to exclude what he believes does not bear the due impress of the author's mind. No doubt as a rule editors have no discretion to be trusted; but happily Mr. Ainger has plenty, and most sincerely do we thank him for withholding from us *A Vision of Horns* and *The Pawnbroker's Daughter*. Boldly to assert, as some are found to do, that the editor of a master of style has no choice but to reprint the scraps or notelets that a misdirected energy may succeed in disinterring from the grave the writer had dug for them, is to fail to grasp the distinction between a collector of *curios* and a lover of books. But this policy of exclusion is no

doubt a perilous one. Like the Irish members, or Mark Antony's wife—the "shrill-toned Fulvia" —the missing essays are "good, being gone." Surely, so we are inclined to grumble, the taste was severe that led Mr. Ainger to dismiss *Juke Judkins*. We are not, indeed, prepared to say that Judkins has been wrongfully dismissed, or that he has any right of action against Mr. Ainger, but we could have put up better with his presence than his absence.

Mr. Ainger's introduction to the *Essays of Elia* is admirable; here is a bit of it:

> Another feature of Lamb's style is its allusiveness. He is rich in quotations, and in my notes I have succeeded in tracing most of them to their source, a matter of some difficulty in Lamb's case, for his inaccuracy is all but perverse. But besides those avowedly introduced as such, his style is full of quotations held, if the expression may be allowed, in solution. One feels, rather than recognises, that a phrase or idiom or turn of expression is an echo of something that one has heard or read before. Yet such is the use made of the material, that a charm is added by the very fact that we are thus continually renewing our experience of an older day. This style becomes aromatic, like the perfume of faded rose-leaves in a china jar. With such allusiveness as this I need not say that I have not meddled in my notes; its whole charm lies in recognising it for ourselves. The "prosperity" of an allusion, as of a jest, "lies in the ear of him that hears it," and it were doing a poor service to Lamb or his readers to draw out and arrange in order the threads he has wrought into the very fabric of his English.

Then Mr. Ainger's notes are not meddlesome notes, but truly explanatory ones, genuine aids to enjoyment. Lamb needs notes, and yet the task of adding them to a structure so fine and of such nicely studied proportions is a difficult one; it is like building a tool-house against La Sainte Chapelle. Deftly has Mr. Ainger inserted his notes,

and capital reading do they make; they tell us all we ought to want to know. He is no true lover of Elia who does not care to know who the "Distant Correspondent" was. And Barbara S——. "It was not much that Barbara had to claim." No, dear child! it was not—"a bare half-guinea"; but you are surely also entitled to be known to us by your real name. When Lamb tells us Barbara's maiden name was Street, and that she was three times married—first to a Mr. Dancer, then to a Mr. Barry, and finally to a Mr. Crawford, whose widow she was when he first knew her—he is telling us things that were not, for the true Barbara was born a Kelly and died a spinster.

Mr. Ainger, as was to be expected, has a full, instructive note anent the Old Benchers of the Inner Temple. Some hasty editors, with a sorrowfully large experience of Lamb's unblushing fictions and Defoe-like falsehoods, and who, perhaps, have wasted good hours trying to find out all about Miss Barbara's third husband, have sometimes assumed that at all events most of the names mentioned by Lamb in his immortal essay on the Benchers are fictitious. Mr. Ainger, however, assures us that the fact is otherwise. Jekyl, Coventry, Pierson, Parton, Read, Wharry, Jackson, and Mingay, no less than "unruffled Samuel Salt," were all real persons, and were called to the Bench of the Honourable Society by those very names. One mistake, indeed, Lamb makes—he writes of Mr. Twopenny as if he had been a Bencher. Now there never yet was a Bencher of the name of Twopenny; though the mistake is easily accounted for. There was a Mr. Twopenny, a very thin man

too, just as Lamb described him, who lived in the Temple; but he was not a Bencher, he was not even a barrister; he was a much better thing, namely, stockbroker to the Bank of England. The holding of this office, which Mr. Ainger rightly calls important, doubtless accounts for Twopenny's constant good-humour and felicitous jesting about his own person. A man who has a snug berth other people want feels free to crack such jokes.

Of the contents of these three volumes we can say deliberately what Dr. Johnson said, surely in his haste, of Baxter's three hundred works, "Read them all, they are all good." Do not be content with the essays alone. It is shabby treatment of an author who has given you pleasure to leave him half unread; it is nearly as bad as keeping a friend waiting. Anyhow, read *Mrs. Leicester's School*; it is nearly all Mary Lamb's, but the more you like it on that account the better pleased her brother would have been.

We are especially glad to notice that Mr. Ainger holds us out hopes of an edition, uniform with the works, of the letters of Charles Lamb. Until he has given us these, also with notes, his pious labours are incomplete. Lamb's letters are not only the best text of his life, but the best comment upon it. They reveal all the heroism of the man and all the cunning of the author; they do the reader good by stealth. Let us have them speedily, so that honest men may have in their houses a complete edition of at least one author of whom they can truthfully say, that they never know whether they most admire the writer or love the man.

THE LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB[1]

1892

FOUR hundred and seventeen letters of Charles Lamb's, some of them never before published, in two well-printed but handy volumes, edited, with notes illustrative, explanatory, and biographical, by Canon Ainger, and supplied with an admirable index, are surely things to be thankful for and to be desired. No doubt the price is prohibitory. They will cost you in cash, these two volumes, full as they are from title-page to colophon with the sweetness and nobility, the mirth and the melancholy of their author's life, touched as every page of them is with traces of a hard fate bravely borne, seven shillings and sixpence. None but American millionaires and foolish book-collectors can bear such a strain upon their purses. It is the cab-fare to and from a couple of dull dinner-parties. But Mudie is in our midst, ever ready to supply our very modest intellectual wants at so much a quarter, and ward off the catastrophe so dreaded by all dust-hating housewives, the accumulation of those "nasty books," for which indeed but slender accommodation is provided in our upholstered households. Yet these volumes, however acquired, whether by purchase, and therefore

[1] *Letters of Charles Lamb*. Newly arranged, with additions; and a new portrait. Edited, with introduction and notes, by the Rev. Alfred Ainger, M.A., Canon of Bristol. 2 vols. London, 1888.

destined to remain by your side ready to be handled whenever the mood seizes you, or borrowed from a library to be returned at the week's end along with the last new novel people are painfully talking about, cannot fail to excite the interest and stir the emotions of all lovers of sound literature and true men.

But first of all, Canon Ainger is to be congratulated on the completion of his task. He told us he was going to edit *Lamb's Works and Letters*, and naturally one believed him; but in this world there is nothing so satisfactory as performance. To see a good work well planned, well executed, and entirely finished by the same hand that penned, and the same mind that conceived, the original scheme, has something about it which is surprisingly gratifying to the soul of man, accustomed as he is to the wreckage of projects and the failure of hopes.

Canon Ainger's edition of *Lamb's Works and Letters* stands complete in six volumes. Were one in search of sentiment, one might perhaps find it in the intimate association existing between the editor and the old church by the side of which Lamb was born, and which he ever loved and accounted peculiarly his own. Elia was born a Templar.

> I was born and passed the first seven years of my life in the Temple. Its church, its halls, its gardens, its fountain, its river, I had almost said—for in those young years, what was this king of rivers to me but a stream that watered our pleasant places?—these are my oldest recollections.

Thus begins the celebrated essay on *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*. As a humble member of that honourable Society, I rejoice that its

Reader should be the man who has, as a labour of love and by virtue of qualifications which cannot be questioned, placed upon the library shelf so complete and choice an edition of the works of one whose memory is perhaps the pleasantest thing about the whole place.

So far as these two volumes of letters are concerned, the course adopted by the editor has been, if I may make bold to say so, the right one. He has simply edited them carefully and added notes and an index. He has not attempted to tell Lamb's life between times. He has already told the story of that life in a separate volume. I wish the practice could be revived of giving us a man's correspondence all by itself in consecutive volumes, as we have the letters of Horace Walpole, of Burke, of Richardson, of Cowper, and many others. It is astonishing what interesting and varied reading such volumes make. They never tire you. You do not stop to be tired. Something of interest is always occurring. Some reference to a place you have visited; to a house you have stayed at; to a book you have read; to a man or woman you wish to hear about. As compared with the measured malice of a set biography, where you feel yourself in the iron grasp, not of the man whose life is being professedly written, but of the man (whom naturally you dislike) who has taken upon himself to write the life, these volumes of correspondence have all the ease and grace and truthfulness of nature. There is about as much resemblance between reading them and your ordinary biography, as between a turn on the treadmill and a saunter into Hertfordshire in search of Mackery

End. I hope when we get hold of the biographies of Lord Beaconsfield and Dean Stanley we shall not find ourselves defrauded of our dues. But it is of the essence of letters that we should have the whole of each. I think it wrong to omit even the merely formal parts. They all hang together. The method employed in the biography of George Eliot was, in my opinion—I can but state it—a vicious method. To serve up letters in solid slabs cut out of longer letters is distressing. Every letter a man writes is an incriminating document. It tells a tale about him. Let the whole be read or none.

Canon Ainger has adopted the right course. He has indeed omitted a few oaths—on the principle that "damns have had their day." For my part, I think I should have been disposed to leave them alone.

> The rough bur-thistle spreading wide
> Amang the bearded bear,
> I turn'd my weeding-clips aside
> And spared the symbol dear.

But this is not a question to discuss with a dignitary of the Church. Leaving out the oaths and, it may perhaps be, here and there a passage where the reckless humour of the writer led him to transcend the limits of becoming mirth, and mere notelets, we have in these two volumes Lamb's letters just as they were written, save in an instance or two where the originals have been partially destroyed. The first is to Coleridge, and is dated May 27th, 1796; the last is to Mrs. Dyer, and was written on December 22nd, 1834. Who, I wonder, ever managed to squeeze into a correspondence of forty years truer humour, madder

nonsense, sounder sense, or more tender sympathy! They do not indeed (these letters) prate about first principles, but they contain many things conducive to a good life here below.

The earlier letters strike the more solemn notes. As a young man Lamb was deeply religious, and for a time the appalling tragedy of his life, the death of his mother by his sister's hand, deepened these feelings. His letters to Coleridge in September and October, 1796, might very well appear in the early chapters of a saint's life. They exhibit the rare union of a colossal strength, entire truthfulness (no single emotion being ever exaggerated), with the tenderest and most refined feelings. Some of his sentences remind one of Johnson, others of Rousseau. How people reading these letters can ever have the impudence to introduce into the tones of their voices when they are referring to Lamb the faintest suspicion of condescension, as if they were speaking of one weaker than themselves, must always remain an unsolved problem of human conceit.

These elevated feelings passed away. He refers to this in a letter written in 1801 to Walter Wilson.

> I have had a time of seriousness, and I have known the importance and reality of a religious belief. Latterly, I acknowledge, much of my seriousness has gone off, whether from new company or some other new associations, but I still retain at bottom a conviction of the truth and a certainty of the usefulness of religion.

The fact, I suspect, was that the strain of religious thoughts was proving too great for a brain which had once succumbed to madness. Religion sits very lightly on some minds. She could not have done so on Lamb's. He took

refuge in trivialities seriously, and played the fool in order to remain sane.

These letters are of the same material as the *Essays of Elia*. The germs, nay, the very phrases, of the latter are frequently to be found in the former. This does not offend in Lamb's case, though as a rule a good letter ought not forcibly to remind us of a good essay by the same hand. Admirable as are Thackeray's lately-published letters, the parts I like best are those which remind me least of a *Roundabout Paper*. The author is always apt to steal in, and the author is the very last person you wish to see in a letter. But as you read Lamb's letters you never think of the author: his personality carries you over everything. He manages—I will not say skilfully, for it was the natural result of his delightful character, always to address his letter to his correspondent—to make it a thing which, apart from the correspondent, his habits and idiosyncrasies, could not possibly have existed in the shape it does. One sometimes comes across things called letters, which might have been addressed to anybody. But these things are not letters: they are extracts from journals or circulars, and are usually either offensive or dull.

Lamb's letters are not indeed model letters like Cowper's. Though natural to Lamb, they cannot be called easy. "Divine chit-chat" is not the epithet to describe them. His notes are all high. He is sublime, heartrending, excruciatingly funny, outrageously ridiculous, sometimes possibly an inch or two overdrawn. He carries the charm of incongruity and total unexpectedness to the highest

pitch imaginable. John Sterling used to chuckle over the sudden way in which you turn up Adam in the following passage from a letter to Bernard Barton:

> Dear B. B.—You may know my letters by the paper and the folding. For the former, I live on scraps obtained in charity from an old friend, whose stationery is a permanent perquisite; for folding, I shall do it neatly when I learn to tie my neckcloths. I surprise most of my friends by writing to them on ruled paper, as if I had not got past pot-hooks and hangers. Sealing-wax I have none on my establishment; wafers of the coarsest bran supply its place. When my epistles come to be weighed with Pliny's, however superior to the Roman in delicate irony, judicious reflections, etc., his gilt post will bribe over the judges to him. All the time I was at the E. I. H. I never mended a pen. I now cut 'em to the stumps, marring rather than mending the primitive goose-quill. I cannot bear to pay for articles I used to get for nothing. When Adam laid out his first penny upon nonpareils at some stall in Mesopotamos, I think it went hard with him, reflecting upon his old goodly orchard where he had so many for nothing.

There are not many better pastimes for a middle-aged man who does not care for first principles or modern novels than to hunt George Dyer up-and-down Charles Lamb. Lamb created Dyer as surely as did Cervantes Don Quixote, Sterne Toby Shandy, or Charles Dickens Sam Weller. Outside Lamb, George Dyer is the deadest of dead authors. Inside Lamb, he is one of the quaintest, queerest, most humorously felicitous of living characters. Pursue this sport through Canon Ainger's first volume and you will have added to your gallery of whimsicalities the picture of George Dyer by a master-hand.

Lamb's relations towards Coleridge and Wordsworth are exceedingly interesting. He loved them both as only Lamb could love his friends. He admired them both immensely as poets. He recognised what he considered their great intel-

lectual superiority over himself. He considered their friendship the crowning glory of his life. For Coleridge his affection reached devotion. The news of his death was a shock he never got over. He would keep repeating to himself, "Coleridge is dead!" But with what a noble, independent, manly mind did he love his friends! How deep, how shrewd was his insight into their manifold infirmities! His masculine nature and absolute freedom from that curse of literature, coterieship, stand revealed on every page of the history of Lamb's friendships.

On page 327 of Canon Ainger's first volume there is a letter of Lamb's, never before printed, addressed to his friend Manning, which is delightful reading. The editor did not get it in time to put it in the text, so the careless reader might overlook it, lurking as it does amongst the notes. It is too long for quotation, but a morsel must be allowed me:

> I lately received from Wordsworth a copy of the second volume, accompanied by an acknowledgment of having received from me many months since a copy of a certain tragedy with excuses for not having made any acknowledgment sooner, it being owing to an almost insurmountable aversion from letter-writing. This letter I answered in due form and time, and enumerated several of the passages which had most affected me, adding, unfortunately, that no single piece had moved me so forcibly as the *Ancient Mariner*, *The Mad Mother*, or the *Lines at Tintern Abbey*. The Post did not sleep a moment. I received almost instantaneously a long letter of four sweating pages from my Reluctant Letter-Writer, the purport of which was, he was sorry his second volume had not given me more pleasure (Devil a hint did I give that it had not pleased me), and was compelled to wish that my range of sensibility was more extended, being obliged to believe that I should receive large influxes of happiness and happy thoughts (I suppose from the *Lyrical Ballads*). With a deal of stuff about a certain union of Tenderness and

Imagination, which in the sense he used Imagination was not the characteristic of Shakespeare, but which Milton possessed in a degree far exceeding other Poets, which union, as the highest species of Poetry and chiefly deserving that name, "he was most proud to aspire to"; then illustrating the said union by two quotations from his own second volume which I had been so unfortunate as to miss.

But my quotation must stop. It has been long enough to make anyone who has not already read the whole letter wish to do so, and to prove what I was saying about the independence of Lamb's judgment even of his best friends. No wonder such a man did not like being called "gentle-hearted" even by S. T. C., to whom he writes:

In the next edition of the *Anthology* (which Phœbus avert, those nine other wandering maids also!) please to blot out "gentle-hearted," and substitute drunken dog, ragged head, seld-shaven, odd-eyed, stuttering, or any other epithet which truly and properly belongs to the gentleman in question.

Of downright fun and fooling of the highest intellectual calibre fine examples abound on all sides. The "Dick Hopkins" letter ranks very high. Manning had sent Lamb from Cambridge a piece of brawn, and Lamb takes it into his head, so teeming with whimsical fancies, to pretend that it had been sent him by an imaginary Dick Hopkins, "the swearing scullion of Caius," who "by industry and agility has thrust himself into the important situation (no sinecure, believe me) of cook to Trinity Hall"; and accordingly he writes the real donor a long letter, singing the praises of this figment of his fancy, and concludes (p. 211):

Do me the favour to leave off the business which you may be at present upon, and go immediately to the kitchens of Trinity and Caius and make my most respectful compliments to Mr. Richard Hopkins and assure him that his brawn is most excellent: and that I am moreover obliged to him for his innuendo about salt water and bran, which I shall not

fail to improve. I leave it to you whether you shall choose to pay him the civility of asking him to dinner while you stay in Cambridge, or in whatever other way you may best like to show your gratitude to *my friend*. Richard Hopkins considered in many points of view is a very extraordinary character. Adieu. I hope to see you to supper in London soon, where we will taste Richard's brawn, and drink his health in a cheerful but moderate cup. We have not many such men in any rank of life as Mr. R. Hopkins. Crisp, the barber of St. Mary's, was just such another. I wonder *he* never sent me any little token, some chestnuts or a puff, or two pound of hair; just to remember him by.

We have little such elaborate jesting nowadays. I suppose we think it not worth the trouble. The Tartary letter to Manning and the rheumatism letters to Crabb Robinson are almost distractingly provocative of deep internal laughter. The letter to Cary apologising for the writer's getting drunk in the British Museum has its sad side; but, if one may parody the remark made by " the young lady of quality " to Dr. Johnson, which he was so fond of getting Boswell to repeat, though it was to the effect that had he (our great moralist) been born out of wedlock his genius would have been his mother's excuse, it may be said that such a letter as Lamb's was ample atonement for his single frailty.

Lamb does not greatly indulge in sarcasm, though nobody could say more thoroughly ill-natured things than he if he chose to do so. George Dawe, the Royal Academician, is roughly used by him. The account he gives of Miss Benger—Benjay he calls her—is not lacking in spleen. But, as a rule, if Lamb disliked a person he damned him and passed on. He did not stop to elaborate his dislikes, or to toss his hatreds up and down, as he does his loves and humorous fancies. He hated the

second Mrs. Godwin with an entire hatred. In a letter written to Manning when in China he says:

> Mrs. Godwin grows every day in disfavour with me. I will be buried with this inscription over me: "Here lies C. L., the woman-hater": I mean that hated one woman; for the rest, God bless them! How do you like the Mandarinesses? Are you on some little footing with any of them?

Scattered up and down these letters are to be found golden sentences, criticisms both of life and of books, to rival which one would have far to go. He has not the glitter of Hazlitt—a writer whom it is a shame to depreciate; nor does he ever make the least pretence of aspiring to the chair of Coleridge. He lived all his life through conscious of a great weakness, and therein indeed lay the foundation of the tower of his strength. "You do not know," he writes to Godwin, "how sore and weak a brain I have, or you would allow for many things in me which you set down for whims." Lamb apologising for himself to Godwin is indeed a thing at which the imagination boggles. But his humility must not blind us to the fact that there are few men from whom we can learn more.

The most striking note of Lamb's literary criticism is its veracity. He is perhaps never mistaken. His judgments are apt to be somewhat too much coloured with his own idiosyncrasy to be what the judicious persons of the period call final and classical, but when did he ever go utterly wrong either in praise or in dispraise? When did he like a book which was not a good book?[1] When did either the glamour of antiquity or the glare of novelty lead him astray?

[1] His ecstatic admiration for the *Religious Musings* of S.T.C. may be accounted for by his state of mind in that year of sorrow, 1797.

How free he was from that silly chatter about books now so abundant! When did he ever pronounce wire-drawn twaddle or sickly fancies, simply reeking of their impending dissolution, to be enduring and noble workmanship?

But it must be owned Lamb was not a great reader of new books. That task devolved upon his sister. He preferred Burnet's *History of his Own Times* to any novel, even to a "Waverley."

Did you ever read [he wrote to Manning] that garrulous, pleasant history? He tells his story like an old man past political service, bragging to his sons on winter evenings of the part he took in public transactions, when his "old cap was new." Full of scandal, which all true history is. No palliatives; but all the stark wickedness, that actually gives the *momentum* to national actors. Quite the prattle of age and outlived importance. Truth and sincerity staring out upon you perpetually in *alto relievo*. Himself a party man, he makes you a party man. None of the cursed, philosophical, Humeian indifference, so cold and unnatural and inhuman! None of the cursed Gibbonian fine writing, so fine and composite! None of Dr. Robertson's periods with three members. None of Mr. Roscoe's sage remarks, all so apposite and coming in so clever, lest the reader should have had the trouble of drawing an inference.

On the subject of children's books Lamb held strong opinions, as indeed he was entitled to do. What married pair with their quiver full ever wrote such tales for children as did this old bachelor and his maiden sister?

I am glad the snuff and Pi-pos's books please. *Goody Two Shoes* is almost out of print. Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery, and the shopman at Newberry's hardly deigned to reach them off an old exploded corner of a shelf when Mary asked for them. Mrs. Barbauld's and Mrs. Trimmer's nonsense lay in piles about. Knowledge insignificant and vapid as Mrs. Barbauld's books convey, it seems must come to a child in the *shape of knowledge*, and his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers

when he has learnt that a horse is an animal, and Billy is better than a horse, and such like—instead of that beautiful interest in wild tales which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child.

Canon Ainger's six volumes are not very big. They take up but little room. They demand no great leisure. But they cannot fail to give immense pleasure to generations to come, to purify tastes, to soften hearts, to sweeten discourse.

CARLYLE

1885

THE accomplishments of our race have of late become so varied, that it is often no easy task to assign him whom we would judge to his proper station among men; and yet, until this has been done, the guns of our criticism cannot be accurately levelled, and as a consequence the greater part of our fire must remain futile. He, for example, who would essay to take account of Mr. Gladstone, must read much else besides Hansard; he must brush up his Homer, and set himself to acquire some theology. The place of Greece in the providential order of the world, and of laymen in the Church of England, must be considered, together with a host of other subjects of much apparent irrelevance to a statesman's life. So too in the case of his distinguished rival, whose death eclipsed the gaiety of politics and banished epigram from Parliament: keen must be the critical faculty which can nicely discern where the novelist ended and the statesman began in Benjamin Disraeli.

Happily, no such difficulty is now before us. Thomas Carlyle was a writer of books, and he was nothing else. Beneath this judgment he would have winced, but have remained silent, for the facts are so.

Little men sometimes, though not perhaps so

often as is taken for granted, complain of their destiny, and think they have been hardly treated, in that they have been allowed to remain so undeniably small; but great men, with hardly an exception, nauseate their greatness for not being of the particular sort they most fancy. The poet Gray was passionately fond, so his biographers tell us, of military history: but he took no Quebec. General Wolfe took Quebec, and whilst he was taking it, recorded the fact that he would sooner have written Gray's *Elegy*; and so Carlyle—who panted for action, who hated eloquence, whose heroes were Cromwell and Wellington, Arkwright and the "rugged Brindley," who beheld with pride and no ignoble envy the bridge at Auldgarth his mason-father had helped to build half a century before, and then exclaimed, "A noble craft, that of a mason; a good building will last longer than most books—than one book in a million"; who despised men of letters, and abhorred the "reading public"; whose gospel was Silence and Action—spent his life in talking and writing; and his legacy to the world is thirty-four volumes octavo.

There is a familiar melancholy in this; but the critic has no need to grow sentimental. We must have men of thought as well as men of action: poets as much as generals; authors no less than artisans; libraries at least as much as militia; and therefore we may accept and proceed critically to examine Carlyle's thirty-four volumes, remaining somewhat indifferent to the fact that had he had the fashioning of his own destiny, we should have had at his hands blows instead of books.

Taking him, then, as he was—a man of letters—

perhaps the best type of such since Dr. Johnson died in Fleet Street, what are we to say of his thirty-four volumes?

In them are to be found criticism, biography, history, politics, poetry, and religion. I mention this variety because of a foolish notion, at one time often found suitably lodged in heads otherwise empty, that Carlyle was a passionate old man, dominated by two or three extravagant ideas, to which he was for ever giving utterance in language of equal extravagance. The thirty-four volumes octavo render this opinion untenable by those who can read. Carlyle cannot be killed by an epigram, nor can the many influences that moulded him be referred to any single source. The rich banquet his genius has spread for us is of many courses. The fire and fury of the Latter Day Pamphlets may be disregarded by the peaceful soul, and the preference given to the "Past" of *Past and Present* which, with its intense and sympathetic mediævalism, might have been written by a Tractarian. The *Life of Sterling* is the favourite book of many who would sooner pick oakum than read *Frederick the Great* all through; whilst the mere student of *belles lettres* may attach importance to the essays on Johnson, Burns, and Scott, on Voltaire and Diderot, on Goethe and Novalis, and yet remain blankly indifferent to *Sartor Resartus* and *The French Revolution.*

But true as this is, it is none the less true that, excepting possibly the *Life of Schiller*, Carlyle wrote nothing not clearly recognisable as his. All his books are his very own—bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. They are not stolen goods,

nor elegant exhibitions of recently and hastily acquired wares.

This being so, it may be as well if, before proceeding any further, I attempt, with a scrupulous regard to brevity, to state what I take to be the invariable indications of Mr. Carlyle's literary handiwork—the tokens of his presence—"Thomas Carlyle, his mark."

First of all, it may be stated, without a shadow of a doubt, that he is one of those who would sooner be wrong with Plato than right with Aristotle; in one word, he is a mystic. What he says of Novalis may with equal truth be said of himself: "He belongs to that class of persons who do not recognise the syllogistic method as the chief organ for investigating truth, or feel themselves bound at all times to stop short where its light fails them. Many of his opinions he would despair of proving in the most patient court of law, and would remain well content that they should be disbelieved there." In philosophy we shall not be very far wrong if we rank Carlyle as a follower of Bishop Berkeley; for an idealist he undoubtedly was. "Matter," says he, "exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea, and body it forth. Heaven and Earth are but the time-vesture of the Eternal. The Universe is but one vast symbol of God; nay, if thou wilt have it, what is man himself but a symbol of God? Is not all that he does symbolical, a revelation to sense of the mystic God-given force that is in him?—a gospel of Freedom, which he, the 'Messias of Nature,' preaches as he can by act and word." "Yes, Friends," he elsewhere observes, "not our logical mensurative faculty,

but our imaginative one, is King over us, I might say Priest and Prophet, to lead us heavenward, or magician and wizard to lead us hellward. The understanding is indeed thy window—too clear thou canst not make it; but phantasy is thy eye, with its colour-giving retina, healthy or diseased." It would be easy to multiply instances of this, the most obvious and interesting trait of Mr. Carlyle's writing; but I must bring my remarks upon it to a close by reminding you of his two favourite quotations, which have both significance. One from Shakespeare's *Tempest*:

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep;

the other, the exclamation of the Earth-spirit, in Goethe's *Faust*:

> 'Tis thus at the roaring loom of Time I ply,
> And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by.

But this is but one side of Carlyle. There is another as strongly marked, which is his second note; and that is what he somewhere calls "his stubborn realism." The combination of the two is as charming as it is rare. No one at all acquainted with his writings can fail to remember his almost excessive love of detail; his lively taste for facts, simply as facts. Imaginary joys and sorrows may extort from him nothing but grunts and snorts; but let him only worry out for himself, from that great dust-heap called "history," some undoubted fact of human and tender interest, and, however small it may be, relating possibly to someone hardly known, and playing but a small part in the events

he is recording, and he will wax amazingly sentimental, and perhaps shed as many real tears as Sterne or Dickens do sham ones over their figments. This realism of Carlyle's gives a great charm to his histories and biographies. The amount he tells you is something astonishing—no platitudes, no rigmarole, no common-form, articles which are the staple of most biography, but, instead of them, all the facts and features of the case—pedigree, birth, father and mother, brothers and sisters, education, physiognomy, personal habits, dress, mode of speech; nothing escapes him. It was a characteristic criticism of his, on one of Miss Martineau's American books, that the story of the way Daniel Webster used to stand before the fire with his hands in his pockets was worth all the politics, philosophy, political economy, and sociology to be found in other portions of the good lady's writings. Carlyle's eye was indeed a terrible organ: he saw everything. Emerson, writing to him, says: "I think you see as pictures every street, church, Parliament-house, barracks, baker's shop, mutton-stall, forge, wharf, and ship, and whatever stands, creeps, rolls, or swims thereabout, and make all your own." He crosses over, one rough day, to Dublin; and he jots down in his diary the personal appearance of some unhappy creatures he never saw before or expected to see again; how men laughed, cried, swore, were all of huge interest to Carlyle. Give him a fact, he loaded you with thanks; propound a theory, you were rewarded with the most vivid abuse.

This intense love for, and faculty of perceiving, what one may call the "concrete picturesque,"

accounts for his many hard sayings about fiction and poetry. He could not understand people being at the trouble of inventing characters and situations when history was full of men and women; when streets were crowded and continents were being peopled under their very noses. Emerson's sphynx-like utterances irritated him at times, as they well might; his orations and the like. "I long," he says, "to see some *concrete thing*, some Event—Man's Life, American Forest, or piece of Creation which this Emerson loves and wonders at, well *Emersonised*, depicted by Emerson—filled with the life of Emerson, and cast forth from him then to live by itself." But Carlyle forgot the sluggishness of the ordinary imagination, and, for the moment, the stupendous dulness of the ordinary historian. It cannot be matter for surprise that people prefer Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker* to his *History of England.*

The third and last mark to which I call attention is his humour. Nowhere, surely, in the whole field of English literature, Shakespeare excepted, do you come upon a more abundant vein of humour than Carlyle's, though I admit that the quality of the ore is not of the finest. His every production is bathed in humour. This must never be, though it often has been, forgotten. He is not to be taken literally. He is always a humorist, not unfrequently a writer of burlesque, and occasionally a buffoon.

Although the spectacle of Mr. Swinburne taking Mr. Carlyle to task, as he recently did, for indelicacy, has an oddity all its own, so far as I am concerned I cannot but concur with this critic in

thinking that Carlyle has laid himself open, particularly in his *Frederick the Great*, to the charge one usually associates with the great and terrible name of Dean Swift; but it is the Dean with a difference, and the difference is all in Carlyle's favour. The former deliberately pelts you with dirt, as did in old days gentlemen electors their parliamentary candidates; the latter only occasionally splashes you, as does a public vehicle pursuing on a wet day its uproarious course.

These, then, I take to be Carlyle's three principal marks or notes: mysticism in thought, realism in description, and humour in both.

To proceed now to his actual literary work.

First, then, I would record the fact that he was a great critic, and this at a time when our literary criticism was a scandal. He more than any other has purged our vision and widened our horizons in this great matter. He taught us there was no sort of finality, but only nonsense, in that kind of criticism which was content with laying down some foreign masterpiece with the observation that it was not suited for the English taste. He was, if not the first, almost the first critic, who pursued in his criticism the historical method, and sought to make us understand what we were required to judge. It has been said that Carlyle's criticisms are not final, and that he has not said the last word about Voltaire, Diderot, Richter, and Goethe. I can well believe it. But reserving " last words " for the use of the last man (to whom they would appear to belong), it is surely something to have said the *first* sensible words uttered in English on these important subjects. We ought

not to forget the early days of the *Foreign* and *Quarterly Reviews*. We have critics now, quieter, more reposeful souls, taking their ease on Zion, who have entered upon a world ready to welcome them, whose keen rapiers may cut velvet better than did the two-handed broadsword of Carlyle, and whose later date may enable them to discern what their forerunner failed to perceive; but when the critics of this century come to be criticised by the critics of the next, an honourable, if not the highest, place will be awarded to Carlyle.

Turn we now to the historian and biographer. History and biography much resemble one another in the pages of Carlyle, and occupy more than half his thirty-four volumes; nor is this to be wondered at, since they afford him fullest scope for his three strong points—his love of the wonderful; his love of telling a story, as the children say, "from the very beginning"; and his humour. His view of history is sufficiently lofty. History, says he, is the true epic poem, a universal divine scripture whose plenary inspiration no one out of Bedlam shall bring into question. Nor is he quite at one with the ordinary historian as to the true historical method. "The time seems coming when he who sees no world but that of courts and camps, and writes only how soldiers were drilled and shot, and how this ministerial conjurer out-conjured that other, and then guided, or at least held, something which he called the rudder of Government, but which was rather the spigot of Taxation, wherewith in place of steering he could tax, will pass for a more or less instructive Gazetteer, but will no longer be called an Historian."

Nor does the philosophical method of writing history please him any better:

> Truly if History is Philosophy teaching by examples, the writer fitted to compose history is hitherto an unknown man. Better were it that mere earthly historians should lower such pretensions, more suitable for omniscience than for human science, and aiming only at some picture of the things acted, which picture itself will be a poor approximation, leave the inscrutable purport of them an acknowledged secret—or at most, in reverent faith, pause over the mysterious vestiges of Him whose path is in the great deep of Time, whom History indeed reveals, but only all History and in Eternity will clearly reveal.

This same transcendental way of looking at things is very noticeable in the following view of Biography: "For, as the highest gospel was a Biography, so is the life of every good man still an indubitable gospel, and preaches to the eye and heart and whole man, so that devils even must believe and tremble, these gladdest tidings. Man is heaven-born—not the thrall of circumstances, of necessity, but the victorious subduer thereof." These, then, being his views, what are we to say of his works? His three principal historical works are, as everyone knows, *Cromwell*, *The French Revolution*, and *Frederick the Great*, though there is a very considerable amount of other historical writing scattered up and down his works. But what are we to say of these three? Is he, by virtue of them, entitled to the rank and influence of a great historian? What have we a right to demand of an historian? First, surely, stern veracity, which implies not merely knowledge but honesty. An historian stands in a fiduciary position towards his readers, and if he withholds from them important facts likely to influence their judgment,

he is guilty of fraud, and, when justice is done in this world, will be condemned to refund all moneys he has made by his false professions, with compound interest. This sort of fraud is unknown to the law, but to nobody else. "Let me know the facts!" may well be the agonised cry of the student who finds himself floating down what Arnold has called "the vast Mississippi of falsehood, History." Secondly comes a catholic temper and way of looking at things. The historian should be a gentleman and possess a moral breadth of temperament. There should be no bitter protesting spirit about him. He should remember the world he has taken upon himself to write about is a large place, and that nobody set him up over us. Thirdly, he must be a born story-teller. If he is not this, he has mistaken his vocation. He may be a great philosopher, a useful editor, a profound scholar, and anything else his friends like to call him, except a great historian. How does Carlyle meet these requirements? His veracity, that is, his laborious accuracy, is admitted by the only persons competent to form an opinion, namely, independent investigators who have followed in his track; but what may be called the internal evidence of the case also supplies a strong proof of it. Carlyle was, as everyone knows, a hero-worshipper. It is part of his mysticism. With him man, as well as God, is a spirit, either of good or evil, and as such should be either worshipped or reviled. He is never himself till he has discovered or invented a hero; and, when he has got him, he tosses and dandles him as a mother her babe. This is a terrible temptation to put in the

way of an historian, and few there be who are found able to resist it. How easy to keep back an ugly fact, sure to be a stumbling-block in the way of weak brethren! Carlyle is above suspicion in this respect. He knows no reticence. Nothing restrains him; not even the so-called proprieties of history. He may, after his boisterous fashion, pour scorn upon you for looking grave, as you read in his vivid pages of the reckless manner in which too many of his heroes drove coaches-and-six through the Ten Commandments. As likely as not he will call you a blockhead, and tell you to close your wide mouth and cease shrieking. But, dear me! hard words break no bones, and it is an amazing comfort to know the facts. Is he writing of Cromwell?—down goes everything—letters, speeches, as they were written, as they were delivered. Few great men are edited after this fashion. Were they to be so—Luther, for example—many eyes would be opened very wide. Nor does Carlyle fail in comment. If the Protector makes a somewhat distant allusion to the Barbadoes, Carlyle is at your elbow to tell you it means his selling people to work as slaves in the West Indies. As for Mirabeau, "our wild Gabriel Honoré," well! we are told all about him; nor is Frederick let off a single absurdity or atrocity. But when we have admitted the veracity, what are we to say of the catholic temper, the breadth of temperament, the wide Shakespearean tolerance? Carlyle ought to have them all. By nature he was tolerant enough; so true a humorist could never be a bigot. When his war-paint is not on, a child might lead him. His judgments are gracious,

chivalrous, tinged with a kindly melancholy and divine pity. But this mood is never for long. Some gadfly stings him: he seizes his tomahawk and is off on the trail. It must sorrowfully be admitted that a long life of opposition and indigestion, of fierce warfare with cooks and Philistines, spoilt his temper, never of the best, and made him too often contemptuous, savage, unjust. His language then becomes unreasonable, unbearable, bad. Literature takes care of herself. You disobey her rules: well and good, she shuts her door in your face; you plead your genius: she replies, "Your temper," and bolts it. Carlyle has deliberately destroyed, by his own wilfulness, the value of a great deal he has written. It can never become classical. Alas! that this should be true of too many eminent Englishmen of our time. Language such as was, at one time, almost habitual with Mr. Ruskin, is a national humiliation, giving point to the Frenchman's sneer as to our distinguishing literary characteristic being "*la brutalité*." In Carlyle's case much must be allowed for his rhetoric and humour. In slang phrase, he always "piles it on." Does a bookseller misdirect a parcel, he exclaims, "My malison on all Blockheadisms and Torpid Infidelities of which this world is full." Still, all allowances made, it is a thousand pities; and one's thoughts turn away from this stormy old man and take refuge in the quiet haven of the Oratory at Birmingham, with his great protagonist,[1] who, throughout an equally long life

[1] This is a wrong use of the word "protagonist." What I meant to imply was that Newman and Carlyle were in their day the leading actors on opposite sides.

spent in painful controversy, and wielding weapons as terrible as Carlyle's own, has rarely forgotten to be urbane, and whose every sentence is a "thing of beauty." It must, then, be owned that too many of Carlyle's literary achievements "lack a gracious somewhat." By force of his genius he "smites the rock and spreads the water"; but then, like Moses, "he desecrates, belike, the deed in doing."

Our third requirement was, it may be remembered, the gift of the story-teller. Here one is on firm ground. Where is the equal of the man who has told us the story of *The Diamond Necklace*?

It is the vogue, nowadays, to sneer at picturesque writing. Professor Seeley, for reasons of his own, appears to think that whilst politics, and I presume religion, may be made as interesting as you please, history should be as dull as possible. This, surely, is a jaundiced view. If there is one thing it is legitimate to make more interesting than another, it is the varied record of man's life upon earth. So long as we have human hearts and await human destinies, so long as we are alive to the pathos, the dignity, the comedy of human life, so long shall we continue to rank above the philosopher, higher than the politician, the great artist, be he called dramatist or historian, who makes us conscious of the divine movement of events, and of our fathers who were before us. Of course we assume accuracy and labour in our animated historian; though, for that matter, other things being equal, I prefer a lively liar to a dull one.

Carlyle is sometimes as irresistible as *The Camp-*

bells are Coming, or *Auld Lang Syne*. He has described some men and some events once and for all, and so takes his place with Thucydides, Tacitus and Gibbon. Pedants may try hard to forget this, and may in their laboured nothings seek to ignore the author of *Cromwell* and *The French Revolution*; but as well might the pedestrian in Cumberland or Inverness seek to ignore Helvellyn or Ben Nevis. Carlyle is *there*, and will remain there, when the pedant of to-day has been superseded by the pedant of to-morrow.

Remembering all this, we are apt to forget his faults, his eccentricities and vagaries, his buffooneries, his too-outrageous cynicisms and his too-intrusive egotisms, and to ask ourselves—if it be not this man, who is it then to be? Macaulay, answer some; and Macaulay's claims are not of the sort to go unrecognised in a world which loves clearness of expression and of view only too well. Macaulay's position never admitted of doubt. We know what to expect, and we always get it. It is like the old days of W. G. Grace's cricket. We went to see the leviathan slog for six, and we saw it. We expected him to do it, and he did it. So with Macaulay—the good Whig, as he takes up the History, settles himself down in his chair, and knows it is going to be a bad time for the Tories. Macaulay's style—his much-praised style—is ineffectual for the purpose of telling the truth about anything. It is splendid, but *splendide mendax*, and in Macaulay's case the style was the man. He had enormous knowledge, and a noble spirit; his knowledge enriched his style, and his spirit consecrated it to the service of Liberty. We

do well to be proud of Macaulay; but we must add that, great as was his knowledge, great also was his ignorance, which was none the less ignorance because it was wilful; noble as was his spirit, the range of subject over which it energised was painfully restricted. He looked out upon the world, but, behold, only the Whigs were good. Luther and Loyola, Cromwell and Claverhouse, Carlyle and Newman—they moved him not; their enthusiasms were delusions, and their politics demonstrable errors. Whereas, of Lord Somers and Charles first Earl Grey it is impossible to speak without emotion. But the world does not belong to the Whigs; and a great historian must be capable of sympathising both with delusions and demonstrable errors. Mr. Gladstone has commented with force upon what he calls Macaulay's invincible ignorance, and further says that to certain aspects of a case (particularly those aspects most pleasing to Mr. Gladstone) Macaulay's mind was hermetically sealed. It is difficult to resist these conclusions; and it would appear no rash inference from them, that a man in a state of invincible ignorance and with a mind hermetically sealed, whatever else he may be—orator, advocate, statesman, journalist, man of letters—can never be a great historian. But, indeed, when one remembers Macaulay's limited range of ideas: the commonplaceness of his morality, and of his descriptions; his absence of humour, and of pathos—for though Miss Martineau says she found one pathetic passage in the History, I have often searched for it in vain; and then turns to Carlyle—to his almost bewildering

affluence of thought, fancy, feeling, humour, pathos—his biting pen, his scorching criticism, his world-wide sympathy (save in certain moods) with everything but the smug commonplace—to prefer Macaulay to him, is like giving the preference to Birket Foster over Salvator Rosa. But if it is not Macaulay, who is it to be? Mr. Hepworth Dixon or Mr. Froude? Of Bishop Stubbs and Professor Freeman it behoves every ignoramus to speak with respect. Horny-handed sons of toil, they are worthy of their wage. Carlyle has somewhere struck a distinction between the historical artist and the historical artisan. The bishop and the professor are historical artisans; artists they are not—and the great historian is a great artist.

England boasts two such artists. Edward Gibbon and Thomas Carlyle. The elder historian may be compared to one of the great Alpine roadways—sublime in its conception, heroic in its execution, superb in its magnificent uniformity of good workmanship. The younger resembles one of his native streams, pent in at times between huge rocks, and tormented into foam, and then effecting its escape down some precipice, and spreading into cool expanses below; but however varied may be its fortunes—however startling its changes—always in motion, always in harmony with the scene around. Is it gloomy? It is with the gloom of the thunder-cloud. Is it bright? It is with the radiance of the sun.

It is with some consternation that I approach the subject of Carlyle's politics. One handles them as does an inspector of police a parcel reported to contain dynamite. The Latter

Day Pamphlets might not unfitly be labelled "Dangerous Explosives."

In this matter of politics there were two Carlyles; and, as generally happens in such cases, his last state was worse than his first. Up to 1843, he not unfairly might be called a Liberal—of uncertain vote it may be—a man difficult to work with, and impatient of discipline, but still aglow with generous heat; full of large-hearted sympathy with the poor and oppressed, and of intense hatred of the cruel and shallow sophistries that then passed for maxims, almost for axioms, of government. In the year 1819, when the yeomanry round Glasgow was called out to keep down some dreadful monsters called "Radicals," Carlyle describes how he met an advocate of his acquaintance hurrying along, musket in hand, to his drill on the Links. "You should have the like of this," said he, cheerily patting his gun. "Yes," was the reply, "but I haven't yet quite settled on which side." And when he did make his choice, on the whole he chose rightly. The author of that noble pamphlet *Chartism*, published in 1840, was at least once a Liberal. Let me quote a passage that has stirred to effort many a generous heart now cold in death:

> Who would suppose that Education were a thing which had to be advocated on the ground of local expediency, or indeed on any ground? As if it stood not on the basis of an everlasting duty, as a prime necessity of man! It is a thing that should need no advocating; much as it does actually need. To impart the gift of thinking to those who cannot think, and yet who could in that case think: this, one would imagine, was the first function a government had to set about discharging. Were it not a cruel thing to see, in any province of an empire, the inhabitants living all mutilated in their limbs, each strong man with his right arm lamed? How much crueller to find the strong soul with its eyes still sealed—its

eyes extinct, so that it sees not! Light has come into the world; but to this poor peasant it has come in vain. For six thousand years the sons of Adam, in sleepless effort, have been devising, doing, discovering; in mysterious, infinite, indissoluble communion, warring, a little band of brothers, against the black empire of necessity and night; they have accomplished such a conquest and conquests; and to this man it is all as if it had not been. The four-and-twenty letters of the alphabet are still runic enigmas to him. He passes by on the other side; and that great spiritual kingdom, the toil-won conquest of his own brothers, all that his brothers have conquered, is a thing not extant for him. An invisible empire; he knows it not—suspects it not. And is not this his withal; the conquest of his own brothers, the lawfully acquired possession of all men? Baleful enchantment lies over him, from generation to generation; he knows not that such an empire is his—that such an empire is his at all. . . . Heavier wrong is not done under the sun. It lasts from year to year, from century to century; the blinded sire slaves himself out, and leaves a blinded son; and men, made in the image of God, continue as two-legged beasts of labour: and in the largest empire of the world it is a debate whether a small fraction of the revenue of one day shall, after thirteen centuries, be laid out on it, or not laid out on it. Have we governors? Have we teachers? Have we had a Church these thirteen hundred years? What is an overseer of souls, an archoverseer, archiepiscopus? Is he something? If so, let him lay his hand on his heart and say what thing!

Nor was the man who in 1843 wrote as follows altogether at sea in politics:

Of Time Bill, Factory Bill, and other such Bills, the present editor has no authority to speak. He knows not, it is for others than he to know, in what specific ways it may be feasible to interfere with legislation between the workers and the master-workers—knows only and sees that legislative interference, and interferences not a few, are indispensable. Nay, interference has begun; there are already factory inspectors. Perhaps there might be mine inspectors too. Might there not be furrow-field inspectors withal, to ascertain how, on 7s. 6d. a week, a human family does live? Again, are not sanitary regulations possible for a legislature? Baths, free air, a wholesome temperature, ceilings twenty feet high, might be ordained by Act of Parliament in all establishments licensed as mills. There are such mills already extant—honour to the builders of them. The legislature can say to others, "Go you and do likewise—better if you can."

By no means a bad programme for 1843; and a good part of it has been carried out, but with next to no aid from Carlyle.

The Radical party has struggled on as best it might, without the author of *Chartism* and *The French Revolution*:

> We shall march prospering—not through his presence;
> Songs may inspirit us—not from his lyre;

and it is no party spirit that leads one to regret the change of mind which prevented the later public life of this great man, and now the memory of it, from being enriched with something better than a five-pound note for Governor Eyre.

But it could not be helped. What brought about the rupture was his losing faith in the ultimate destiny of man upon earth. No more terrible loss can be sustained. It is of both heart and hope. He fell back upon heated visions of heaven-sent heroes, devoting their early days for the most part to hoodwinking the people, and their latter ones, more heroically, to shooting them.

But it is foolish to quarrel with results, and we may learn something even from the later Carlyle. We lay down John Bright's Reform Speeches, and take up Carlyle and light upon a passage like this: "Inexpressibly delirious seems to me the puddle of Parliament and public upon what it calls the Reform Measure, that is to say, the calling in of new supplies of blockheadism, gullibility, bribability, amenability to beer and balderdash, by way of amending the woes we have had from previous supplies of that bad article." This view must be accounted for as well as Mr. Bright's. We shall do well to remember, with Carlyle, that

the best of all Reform Bills is that which each citizen passes in his own breast, where it is pretty sure to meet with strenuous opposition. The reform of ourselves is no doubt an heroic measure never to be overlooked, and, in the face of accusations of gullibility, bribability, amenability to beer and balderdash, our poor humanity can only stand abashed, and feebly demur to the bad English in which the charges are conveyed. But we can't all lose hope. We remember Sir David Ramsay's reply to Lord Rea once quoted by Carlyle himself. Then said his lordship: "Well, God mend all." "Nay, by God, Donald, we must help Him to mend it!" It is idle to stand gaping at the heavens, waiting to feel the thong of some hero of questionable morals and robust conscience; and therefore, unless Reform Bills can be shown to have checked purity of election, to have increased the stupidity of electors, and generally to have promoted corruption—which notoriously they have not—we may allow Carlyle to make his exit "swearing," and regard their presence in the Statute Book, if not with rapture, at least with equanimity.

But it must not be forgotten that the battle is still raging—the issue is still uncertain. Mr. Froude is still free to assert that the "*post-mortem*" will prove Carlyle was right. His political sagacity no reader of *Frederick* can deny; his insight into hidden causes and far-away effects was keen beyond precedent—nothing he ever said deserves contempt, though it may merit anger. If we would escape his conclusion, we must not altogether disregard his premises. Bankruptcy and death

are the final heirs of imposture and make-believes. The old faiths and forms are worn too threadbare by a thousand disputations to bear the burden of the new democracy, which, if it is not merely to win the battle but to hold the country, must be ready with new faiths and forms of her own. They are within her reach if she but knew it; they lie to her hand: surely they will not escape her grasp! If they do not, then, in the glad day when worship is once more restored to man, he will with becoming generosity forget much that Carlyle has written, and remembering more, rank him amongst the prophets of humanity.

Carlyle's poetry can only be exhibited in long extracts, which would be here out of place, and might excite controversy as to the meaning of words, and draw down upon me the measureless malice of the metricists. There are, however, passages in *Sartor Resartus* and *The French Revolution* which have long appeared to me to be the sublimest poetry of the century; and it was therefore with great pleasure that I found Mr. Justice Stephen, in his book on *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*, introducing a quotation from the eighth chapter of the third book of *Sartor Resartus*, with the remark that "it is perhaps the most memorable utterance of the greatest poet of the age."

As for Carlyle's religion, it may be said he had none, inasmuch as he expounded no creed and put his name to no confession. This is the pedantry of the schools. He taught us religion, as cold water and fresh air teach us health, by rendering the conditions of disease well-nigh impossible. For

more than half a century, with superhuman energy, he struggled to establish the basis of all religions, "reverence and godly fear." "Love not pleasure, love God; this is the everlasting Yea."

One's remarks might here naturally come to an end with a word or two of hearty praise of the brave course of life led by the man who awhile back stood the acknowledged head of English letters. But the present time is not the happiest for a panegyric on Carlyle. It would be in vain to deny that the brightness of his reputation underwent an eclipse, visible everywhere, by the publication of his *Reminiscences*. They surprised most of us, pained not a few, and hugely delighted that ghastly crew, the wreckers of humanity, who are never so happy as when employed in pulling down great reputations to their own miserable levels. When these "baleful creatures," as Carlyle would have called them, have lit upon any passage indicative of conceit or jealousy or spite, they have fastened upon it and screamed over it, with a pleasure but ill-concealed and with a horror but ill-feigned. "Behold," they exclaim, "your hero robbed of the nimbus his inflated style cast around him—this preacher and fault-finder reduced to his principal parts: and lo! the main ingredient is most unmistakably 'bile!'"

The critic, however, has nought to do either with the sighs of the sorrowful, "mourning when a hero falls," or with the scorn of the malicious, rejoicing, as did Bunyan's Juryman, Mr. Live-loose, when Faithful was condemned to die: "I could never endure him, for he would always be condemning my way."

The critic's task is to consider the book itself, *i.e.*, the nature of its contents, and how it came to be written at all.

When this has been done, there will not be found much demanding moral censure; whilst the reader will note with delight, applied to the trifling concerns of life, those extraordinary gifts of observation and apprehension which have so often charmed him in the pages of history and biography.

These peccant volumes contain but four sketches: one of his father, written in 1832; the other three, of Edward Irving, Lord Jeffrey, and Mrs. Carlyle, all written after the death of the last-named, in 1866.

The only fault that has been found with the first sketch is, that in it Carlyle hazards the assertion that Scotland does not now contain his father's like. It ought surely to be possible to dispute this opinion without exhibiting emotion. To think well of their forebears is one of the few weaknesses of Scotchmen. This sketch, as a whole, must be carried to Carlyle's credit, and is a permanent addition to literature. It is pious, after the high Roman fashion. It satisfies our finest sense of the fit and proper. Just exactly so should a literate son write of an illiterate peasant father. How immeasurable seems the distance between the man from whom proceeded the thirty-four volumes we have been writing about and the Calvinistic mason who didn't even know his Burns!—and yet here we find the whole distance spanned by filial love.

The sketch of Lord Jeffrey is inimitable. One

was getting tired of Jeffrey, and prepared to give him the go-by, when Carlyle creates him afresh, and, for the first time, we see the bright little man bewitching us by what he is, disappointing us by what he is not. The spiteful remarks the sketch contains may be considered, along with those of the same nature to be found only too plentifully in the remaining two papers.

After careful consideration of the worst of these remarks, Mrs. Oliphant's explanation seems the true one; they are most of them sparkling bits of Mrs. Carlyle's conversation. She, happily for herself, had a lively wit, and, perhaps not so happily, a biting tongue, and was, as Carlyle tells us, accustomed to make him laugh, as they drove home together from London crushes, by far from genial observations on her fellow-creatures, little recking—how should she?—that what was so lightly uttered was being engraven on the tablets of the most marvellous of memories, and was destined long afterwards to be written down in grim earnest by a half-frenzied old man, and printed, in cold blood, by an English gentleman.

The horrible description of Mrs. Irving's personal appearance, and the other stories of the same connection, are recognised by Mrs. Oliphant as in substance Mrs. Carlyle's; whilst the malicious account of Mrs. Basil Montague's head-dress is attributed by Carlyle himself to his wife. Still, after dividing the total, there is a good helping for each, and blame would justly be Carlyle's due if we did not remember, as we are bound to do, that, interesting as these three sketches are, their interest is pathological, and ought never to have

been given us. Mr. Froude should have read them in tears, and burnt them in fire. There is nothing surprising in the state of mind which produced them. They are easily accounted for by our sorrow-laden experience. It is a familiar feeling which prompts a man, suddenly bereft of one whom he alone really knew and loved, to turn in his fierce indignation upon the world, and deride its idols whom all are praising, and which yet to him seem ugly by the side of one of whom no one speaks. To be angry with such a sentence as "scribbling Sands and Eliots, not fit to compare with my incomparable Jeannie," is at once inhuman and ridiculous. This is the language of the heart, not of the head. It is no more criticism than is the trumpeting of a wounded elephant zoology.

Happy the man who at such a time holds his peace and drops his pen; but unhappiest of all is he who, having dipped his sorrow into ink, entrusts the manuscript to a romantic historian.

The two volumes of the *Life*, and the three volumes of Mrs. Carlyle's *Correspondence*, unfortunately did not pour oil upon the troubled waters. The partisanship they evoked was positively indecent. Mrs. Carlyle had her troubles and her sorrows, as have most women who live under the same roof with a man of creative genius; but of one thing we may be quite sure, that she would have been the first, to use her own expressive language, to require God "particularly to damn" her impertinent sympathisers. As for Mr. Froude, he may yet discover his Nemesis in the spirit of an angry woman whose privacy he has invaded, and whose diary he has most wantonly published.

These dark clouds are ephemeral. They will roll away, and we shall once more gladly recognise the lineaments of an essentially lofty character, of one who, though a man of genius and of letters, neither outraged society nor stooped to it; was neither a rebel nor a slave; who in poverty scorned wealth; who never mistook popularity for fame; but from the first assumed, and throughout maintained, the proud attitude of one whose duty it was to teach and not to tickle mankind.

Brother-dunces, lend me your ears! not to crop, but that I may whisper into their furry depths: "Do not quarrel with genius. We have none ourselves, and yet are so constituted that we cannot live without it."

EMERSON

1887

THERE are men whose charm is in their entirety. Their words occasionally utter what their looks invariably express. We read their thoughts by the light of their smiles. Not to see and hear these men is not to know them, and criticism without personal knowledge is in their case mutilation. Those who did know them listen in despair to the half-hearted praise and clumsy disparagement of critical strangers, and are apt to exclaim, as did the younger Pitt, when some extraneous person was expressing wonder at the enormous reputation of Fox, "Ah! you have never been under the wand of the magician."

Of such was Ralph Waldo Emerson. When we find so cool-brained a critic as Mr. Lowell writing and quoting thus of Emerson:

> Those who heard him while their natures were yet plastic, and their mental nerves trembled under the slightest breath of divine air, will never cease to feel and say:
>
> "Was never eye did see that face,
> Was never ear did hear that tongue,
> Was never mind did mind his grace
> That ever thought the travail long;
> But eyes, and ears, and every thought
> Were with his sweet perfections caught";

we recognise at once that the sooner we take off our shoes the better, for that the ground upon which we are standing is holy. How can we

sufficiently honour the men who, in this secular, work-a-day world, habitually breathe

An ampler ether, a diviner air,

than ours!

But testimony of this kind, conclusive as it is upon the question of Emerson's personal influence, will not always be admissible in support of his claims as an author. In the long run an author's only witnesses are his own books.

In Dr. Holmes's estimate of Emerson's books everyone must wish to concur.[1] These are not the days, nor is this dry and thirsty land of ours the place, when or where we can afford to pass by any well of spiritual influence. It is matter, therefore, for rejoicing that, in the opinion of so many good judges, Emerson's well can never be choked up. His essays, so at least we are told by no less a critic than Mr. Arnold, are the most valuable prose contributions to English literature of the century; his letters to Mr. Carlyle carried into all our homes the charm of a most delightful personality; the quaint melody of his poems abides in many ears. He would, indeed, be a churl who grudged Emerson his fame.

But when we are considering a writer so full of intelligence as Emerson—one so remote and detached from the world's bluster and brag—it is especially incumbent upon us to charge our own language with intelligence, and to make sure that what we say is at least truth for us.

Were we at liberty to agree with Dr. Holmes, in his unmeasured praise—did we, in short, find Emerson full of inspiration—our task would be

[1] See *Life of Emerson*, by O. W. Holmes.

as easy as it would be pleasant; but not entirely agreeing with Dr. Holmes, and somehow missing the inspiration, the difficulty we began by mentioning presses heavily upon us.

Pleasant reading as the introductory thirty-five pages of Dr. Holmes's book make, we doubt the wisdom of so very sketchy an account of Emerson's lineage and intellectual environment. Attracted towards Emerson everybody must be; but there are many who have never been able to get quit of an uneasy fear as to his "staying power." He has seemed to some of us a little thin and vague. A really great author dissipates all such fears. Read a page and they are gone. To inquire after the intellectual health of such a one would be an impertinence. Emerson hardly succeeds in inspiring this confidence, but is more like a clever invalid who says, and is encouraged by his friends to say, brilliant things, but of whom it would be cruel to expect prolonged mental exertion. A man, he himself has said, "should give us a sense of mass." He perhaps does not do so. This gloomy and possibly distorted view is fostered rather than discouraged by Dr. Holmes's introductory pages about Boston life and intellect. It does not seem to have been a very strong place. We lack performance. It is of small avail to write, as Dr. Holmes does, about "brilliant circles," and "literary luminaries," and then to pass on, and leave the circles circulating and the luminaries shining *in vacuo*. We want to know how they were brilliant, and what they illuminated. If you wish me to believe that you are witty I must really trouble you to make a joke. Dr. Holmes's

own wit, for example, is as certain as the law of gravitation, but over all these pages of his hangs vagueness, and we scan them in vain for reassuring details.

"Mild orthodoxy, ripened in Unitarian sunshine," does not sound very appetising, though we are assured by Dr. Holmes that it is "a very agreeable aspect of Christianity." Emerson himself does not seem to have found it very lively, for in 1832, after three years' experience of the ministry of the "Second Church" of Boston, he retires from it, not tumultuously or with any deep feeling, but with something very like a yawn. He concludes his farewell sermon to his people as follows:

> Having said this I have said all. I have no hostility to this institution.[1] I am only stating my want of sympathy with it.

Dr. Holmes makes short work of Emerson's childhood. He was born in Boston on the 25th May, 1803, and used to sit upon a wall and drive his mother's cow to pasture. In fact, Dr. Holmes adds nothing to what we already knew of the quiet and blameless life that came to its appointed end on the 27th April, 1882. On the completion of his college education, Emerson became a student of theology, and after a turn at teaching, was ordained, in March 1829, minister of the "Second Church" in Boston. In September of the same year he married; and the death of his young wife, in February 1832, perhaps quickened the doubts and disinclinations which severed his connection with his "Institution" on the 9th September, 1832. The following year he visited Europe for

[1] The "institution" here referred to was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

the first time, and made his celebrated call upon Carlyle at Craigenputtock, and laid the keel of a famous friendship. In the summer of 1834 he settled at Concord. He married again, visited England again, wrote essays, delivered lectures, made orations, published poems, carried on a long and most remarkable correspondence with Carlyle, enjoyed after the most temperate and serene of fashions many things and much happiness. And then he died.

"Can you emit sparks?" said the cat to the ugly duckling in the fairy tale, and the poor abashed creature had to admit that it could not. Emerson could emit sparks with the most electrical of cats. He is all sparks and shocks. If one were required to name the most non-sequacious author one had ever read, I do not see how we could help nominating Emerson. But, say some of his warmest admirers, "What then?" "It does not matter!" It appears to me to matter a great deal.

A wise author never allows his reader's mind to be at large, but casts about from the very first how to secure it all for himself. He takes you (seemingly) into his confidence, perhaps pretends to consult you as to the best route, but at all events points out to you the road, lying far ahead, which you are to travel in his company. How carefully does a really great writer, like Dr. Newman or M. Renan, explain to you what he is going to do and how he is going to do it! His humour, wit, and fancy, however abundant they may be, spring up like wayside flowers, and do but adorn and render more attractive the path along which it is his object to conduct you. The reader's mind, in-

terested from the beginning, and desirous of ascertaining whether the author keeps his word, and adheres to his plan, feels the glow of healthy exercise, and pays a real though unconscious attention. But Emerson makes no terms with his readers—he gives them neither thread nor clue, and thus robs them of one of the keenest pleasures of reading,—the being beforehand with your author, and going shares with him in his own thoughts.

If it be said that it is manifestly unfair to compare a mystical writer like Emerson with a polemical or historical one, I am not concerned to answer the objection, for let the comparison be made with whom you will, the unparalleled non-sequaciousness of Emerson is as certain as the Correggiosity of Correggio. You never know what he will be at. His sentences fall over you in glittering cascades, beautiful and bright, and for the moment refreshing, but after a very brief while the mind, having nothing to do on its own account but to remain wide open, and see what Emerson sends it, grows first restive and then torpid. Admiration gives way to astonishment, astonishment to bewilderment, and bewilderment to stupefaction.

"Napoleon is not a man, but a system," once said, in her most impressive tones, Madame de Staël to Sir James Mackintosh, across a dinner-table. "Magnificent!" murmured Sir James. "But what does she mean?" whispered one of those helplessly commonplace creatures who, like the present writer, go about spoiling everything. "Mass! I cannot tell!" was the frank acknowledgment and apt Shakespearean quotation of

Mackintosh. Emerson's meaning, owing to his non-sequacious style, is often very difficult to apprehend. Hear him for a moment on "Experience":

> I gossip for my hour concerning the eternal politics. I have seen many fair pictures, not in vain. A wonderful time I have lived in. I am not the novice I was fourteen, nor yet seven years ago. Let who will ask, Where is the fruit? I find a private fruit sufficient. This is a fruit, that I should not ask for a rash effect from meditations, counsels, and the hiving of truths.

This surely is an odd way of hiving truths. It follows from it that Emerson is more striking than suggestive. He likes things on a large scale—he is fond of ethnical remarks and typical persons. Notwithstanding his habit of introducing the names of common things into his discourses and poetry ("Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool, and wood," is a line from one of his poems), his familiarity therewith is evidently not great. "Take care, papa," cried his little son, seeing him at work with his spade, "you will dig your leg."

His essay on *Friendship* will not be found satisfactory. Here is a subject on which surely we are entitled to "body." *The Over-Soul* was different, *there* it was easy to agree with Carlyle, who, writing to Emerson, says: "Those voices of yours which I likened to unembodied souls and censure sometimes for having no body,—how *can* they have a body? They are light rays darting upwards in the east!" But friendship is a word the very sight of which in print makes the heart warm. One remembers Elia: "Oh! it is pleasant as it is rare to find the same arm linked in yours at forty which at thirteen helped it to turn over the Cicero *De Amicitiâ*, or some other tale of antique friendship

which the young heart even then was burning to anticipate." With this in your ear it is rather chilling to read, "I do, then, with my friends as I do with my books. I would have them where I can find them, but I seldom use them. We must have society on our own terms, and admit or exclude it on the slightest cause. I cannot afford to speak much with my friend." These are not genial terms.

For authors and books his affection, real as it was, was singularly impersonal. In his treatment of literary subjects, we miss the purely human touch, the grip of affection, the accent of scorn, that so pleasantly characterise the writings of Mr. Lowell. Emerson, it is to be feared, regarded a company of books but as a congeries of ideas. For one idea he is indebted to Plato, for another to Dr. Channing. *Sartor Resartus*, so Emerson writes, is a noble philosophical poem, but "have you read Sampson Read's *Growth of the Mind*?" We read somewhere of "Pindar, Raphael, Angelo, Dryden, and De Staël." Emerson's notions of literary perspective are certainly "very early." Dr. Holmes himself is every bit as bad. In this very book of his, speaking about the dangerous liberty some poets—Emerson amongst the number—take of crowding a redundant syllable into a line, he reminds us "that Shakespeare and Milton knew how to use it effectively; Shelley employed it freely; Bryant indulged in it; Willis was fond of it." One has heard of the "Republic of Letters," but this surely does not mean that one author is as good as another. "Willis was fond of it." I daresay he was, but we are not fond of Willis, and

cannot help regarding the citation of his poetical example as an outrage.

None the less, if we will have but a little patience, and bid our occasional wonderment be still, and read Emerson at the right times and in small quantities, we shall not remain strangers to his charm. He bathes the universe in his thoughts. Nothing less than the Whole ever contented Emerson. His was no parochial spirit. He cries out:

> From air and ocean bring me foods,
> From all zones and altitudes.

How beautiful, too, are some of his sentences. Here is a bit from his essay on Shakespeare in *Representative Men*:

> It is the essence of poetry to spring like the rainbow daughter of Wonder from the invisible, to abolish the past, and refuse all history. Malone, Warburton, Dyce, and Collier have wasted their oil. The famed theatres have vainly assisted. Betterton, Garrick, Kemble, Kean, and Macready dedicate their lives to his genius—him they crown, elucidate, obey, and express,—the genius knows them not. The recitation begins; *one golden word leaps out immortal from all this painful pedantry, and sweetly torments us with invitations to its own inaccessible homes.*

The words we have ventured to italicise seem to us to be of surpassing beauty, and to express what many a play-goer of late years must often have dimly felt.

Patience should indeed be the motto for any Emerson reader who is not by nature "author's kin." For example, in the essay on *Character*, after reading, "Everything in nature is bipolar, or has a positive and negative pole. There is a male and a female, a spirit and a fact, a north and a south. Spirit is the positive, the event is the negative; will is the north, action the south

pole. Character may be ranked as having its natural place in the north,"—how easy to lay the book down and read no more that day; but a moment's patience is amply rewarded, for but sixteen lines farther on we may read as follows: "We boast our emancipation from many superstitions; but if we have broken any idols, it is through a transfer of the idolatry. What have I gained that I no longer immolate a bull to Jove, or to Neptune, or a mouse to Hecate; that I do not tremble before the Eumenides, or the Catholic Purgatory, or the Calvinistic Judgment Day,—if I quake at opinion, the public opinion as we call it; or at the threat of assault, or contumely, or bad neighbours, or poverty, or mutilation, or at the rumour of revolution or of murder! If I quake, what matters it what I quake at?" Well and truly did Carlyle write to Emerson, "You are a new era, my man, in your huge country."

Emerson's poetry has at least one of the qualities of true poetry—it always pleases and occasionally delights. Great poetry it may not be, but it has the happy knack of slipping in between our fancies, and of clinging like ivy to the masonry of the thought-structure beneath which each one of us has his dwelling. I must be allowed room for two quotations, one from the stanzas called *Give all to Love*, the other from *Wood-Notes*.

Cling with life to the maid;
But when the surprise,
First vague shadow of surmise,
Flits across her bosom young
Of a joy apart from thee,
Free be she, fancy-free,
Nor thou detain her vesture's hem,
Nor the palest rose she flung

From her summer diadem.
Though thou loved her as thyself,
As a self of purer clay,
Though her parting dims the day,
Stealing grace from all alive;
Heartily know
When half-gods go,
The gods arrive.

The lines from *Wood-Notes* run as follows:

Come learn with me the fatal song
Which knits the world in music strong,
Whereto every bosom dances,
Kindled with courageous fancies;
Come lift thine eyes to lofty rhymes
Of things with things, of times with times,
Primal chimes of sun and shade,
Of sound and echo, man and maid;
The land reflected in the flood;
Body with shadow still pursued.
For nature beats in perfect tune
And rounds with rhyme her every rune;
Whether she work in land or sea
Or hide underground her alchemy,
Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.
Not unrelated, unaffied,
But to each thought and thing allied,
Is perfect nature's every part,
Rooted in the mighty heart.

What place Emerson is to occupy in American literature is for America to determine. Some authoritative remarks on this subject are to be found in Mr. Lowell's essay on "Thoreau," in *My Study Windows*; but here at home, where we are sorely pressed for room, it is certain he must be content with a small allotment, where, however, he may for ever sit beneath his own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid. Emerson will always be the favourite author of somebody; and to be always read by somebody is better than

to be read first by everybody and then by nobody. Indeed, it is hard to fancy a pleasanter destiny than to join the company of lesser authors. All their readers are sworn friends. They are spared the harsh discords of ill-judged praise and feigned rapture. Once or twice in a century some enthusiastic and expansive admirer insists upon dragging them from their shy retreats, and trumpeting their fame in the market-place, asserting, possibly with loud asseverations (after the fashion of Mr. Swinburne), that they are precisely as much above Otway and Collins and George Eliot as they are below Shakespeare and Hugo and Emily Brontë. The great world looks on good-humouredly for a moment or two, and then proceeds as before, and the disconcerted author is left free to scuttle back to his corner, where he is all the happier, sharing the raptures of the lonely student, for his brief experience of publicity.

Let us bid farewell to Emerson (who has bidden farewell to the world) in the words of his own *Good-bye*.

Good-bye to flattery's fawning face,
To grandeur with his wise grimace,
To upstart wealth's averted eye,
To supple office low and high,
To crowded halls, to court and street,
To frozen hearts and hasting feet,
To those who go and those who come,—
Good-bye, proud world, I'm going home.
I am going to my own hearth-stone
Bosomed in yon green hills, alone,
A secret nook in a pleasant land,
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned;
Where arches green the livelong day
Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
And vulgar feet have never trod,
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.

EMERSON[1]

1903

THE chronological fact that Emerson was born in Boston, Mass., on the 25th of May, 1803, a hundred years ago, does not make my task to-night any the easier. Few men of the modern world have been written about more than he, or by a greater variety of persons. Austere critics, and wild ones; sober-minded folk, mindful of all the traditions, and the veriest outlaws of thought, the Ishmaels of literature, have alike made Emerson the subject of their remarks. But Emerson has not only been written about, he has been read, and read zealously, in a serious spirit, in the study, in the pulpit, in college-rooms, in poor men's dwellings and in the open field. He has had those perilous belongings, that often damaging *entourage* —disciples. An American, writing in the Emerson Centenary number of the *Critic*, with the courage of his race, has hazarded the observation that if all the fools, the "different kinds of fools, that have been helplessly made by Emerson and by Whitman could be gotten together *en masse*, lined up and opposed to one another, and looked over, Emerson's lot of fools would be more creditable to him than Whitman's." There is something almost stupendous in this mode of estimating

[1] An address delivered before the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, London, on June 2nd, 1903, and now published with the permission of the Association

disciplehood. Trembling I pass it by, merely quoting it to help us to realise for one dim moment to-night how vast is the range of Emerson's influence, and how impossible it would be to number his tribe.

Remembering as I do, and as you do, what has been written about Emerson by such men as Lowell and Holmes on his own side of the water; and by Arnold and by John Morley on this side; remembering also that marvellous correspondence between Emerson and Carlyle in which each describes the other in a series of felicitous strokes; and knowing that I am addressing those whose acquaintance with Emerson's way of thinking and modes of expression is at least as great as my own, I do not propose to retell a familiar tale or to tease you by any tiresome comments of mine on those slender, much-loved volumes, some of you know better than you do your Bibles.

I invite your attention, first to the nature of the man himself, and his genesis in Boston, and then to his dominant ideas.

One thing must be conceded to me at the outset, and it adds to the interest of the theme. Whatever anyone may now think of Emerson, whether he is to remain for long years to come, as Froude thought Carlyle was to do, a light in the sky, or is destined to fade away as do the colours of the sunset, he was once upon a time, and for a long time, a veritable sign in the heavens—a subtle influence, a something that made all the difference to many a mind. Criticise Emerson as you may, even harshly if it suits your humour (and he lends himself to criticism), predict his decline and fall in a

country which is travelling at lightning speed along paths he never trod—yet historically it is certain that from 1837 onwards Emerson spoke in many an ear as did hardly any other man; that he was what Carlyle in 1841 pronounced him to be, a new era in his country's history, and that thousands of readers in both the Old World and the New never forgot to their dying day, the very place and year when first their souls vibrated to the strange charm, the infinite courage, the inbred composure, the spiritual independence of this New Englander.

> I am owner of the sphere,
> Of the seven stars and the solar year,
> Of Cæsar's hand, and Plato's brain,
> Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain.

It is five-and-thirty years since I first read these lines with a shiver of excitement.

Carlyle's famous essay on "The Signs of the Times" appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1829, the first, and not the least moving sermon preached to a wicked and adulterous generation by the most tempestuous of all its preachers. It is still worth while to take down from a dusty shelf No. 98 of the "Blue and Buff," and there to recognise amidst the deadest of all dead things, dead notices of dead books by dead authors, the fiery vocables, still glowing like live embers, of the future author of *Sartor Resartus* and *The French Revolution.*

Two years later in the same organ of respectable Whig opinion, Carlyle's second Sermon to Infidels entitled "Characteristics" made its appearance, greatly to the annoyance of the regular subscriber,

but carrying the strangest sense of impending movement and change of mental posture to many a hitherto solitary thinker. Newman, we know, read it with amazement, wondering, so akin was it to much of his own thought, from whence it proceeded, and wondering also, as well he might, whither it tended. Emerson read both "Signs of the Times" and "Characteristics" with that uplifting of the heart that proclaims an epoch.

Between the environments of these two men as yet unknown to one another—Emerson and Carlyle—how great a difference!

It is always difficult to estimate the force of religion in any community. It may easily be exaggerated. It may easily be overlooked. In Catholic Spain, in Presbyterian Scotland, in Calvinistic New England there could never have been any doubt as to what were the dominant, I will not say domineering, religious views of the community—but Human Nature (of this we may be sure), never failed to assert itself in Madrid, Edinburgh, and Boston; and Human Nature is never sectarian. Secular characters abound everywhere. Cheerfulness, worldliness, nay even Pagan indifference, break out at all times and in all places. Franklin's Autobiography is a more truly national document than Jonathan Edward's "Careful and Strict Enquiry" into the Freedom of the Will. In the chapels of the straitest sects are to be discovered elders and deacons of both degrees; deathbed deacons and deacons whose worldliness and good nature were alike incorrigible. Mrs. Stowe, that true humorist, has drawn both kinds to the very life.

Still, the dominant religious views of a community

must always count for a great deal; and in New England, Calvinism, seemingly firmly built on the depravity of Human Nature, the corruption of man's heart, and with its great central doctrine, going deep down into Hell, of Original Sin, remained until after the Revolution the creed of the community, mitigated by Human Nature, with its undying delight in its own reproductiveness.

But a change took place—a great change, and very quickly. To turn Calvinism into Unitarianism, to substitute William Ellery Channing for Jonathan Edwards, to see Emerson gracefully climbing the pulpit of Cotton Mather, was a rapidly-effected change, only possible, perhaps, in a new country. How did Boston come to lose its faith in the Corruption of Man's Heart?

Recent American writers have dwelt a good deal upon what they have called their "national inexperience." They are supplying the want, if it be one, very quickly. The Calvinists got rid of the Indians and the witches with that vigorous robustness of action that admits of no doubt as to God being on your side; and the ground thus cleared of God's enemies, it became possible to lead a life in New England homesteads of great simplicity and detachment, free from the pressure of the past, quit of the weight of tradition, ignorant of and therefore untroubled by authority, unfettered by any obligation to admire masterpieces, or by any school of criticism. The creed of Calvinism was no doubt there—in the background, supported by public opinion, so far as public opinion was vocal, and always well defended in church committees when new ministers were to be appointed, but not

bolstered up, and buttressed and battlemented by Thrones, Cathedrals, Bishoprics, and Universities. As yet no crowded cities full of slums and gin-shops yawned hell upon all beholders. Horrible, unnameable offences were not, as in the old country, part of the criminal calendar of every gaol-delivery. A belief in human goodness became quite practicable. The present professor of English at Harvard, Mr. Barrett Wendell, in his *Literary History of America*, happily compares the New England of the period before the Revolution to an only child gravely playing alone in a quiet nursery. It is indeed a happy comparison. An only child has no one to arouse angry passions by gouging out her doll's eyes or kicking over her tower of bricks. Such a lonely mortal easily begins to believe that it is all nonsense about the corruption of man's heart. Dr. Watts's Hymns and Moral Songs were written for a crowded nursery. New England was a quiet place, where the population bred up in quiet puritan habits lived quiet lives, separate and apart from great currents of thought and untrammelled speculation, pursuing its own line of development, and by the end of the eighteenth century, somehow or another, it came about that Calvinism as a system died out in the hearts of the people, and in the University itself in the very year of Emerson's birth the chief chair in Theology was bestowed upon an avowed and pronounced Unitarian.

Nowhere else has Unitarianism as a professed belief become dominant. In Boston it ruled the roost for many a day. We may here see illustrated the difference between an old country with an Established Church and a new country free to

swing as it chooses. In England there are hundreds of thousands of Unitarians who have never entered a Unitarian chapel and never mean to do so. It would be difficult to name a more emphatic Unitarian than Carlyle, yet he does not disguise from Emerson, but half released from that body, his dislike—almost contempt—for Unitarians. He writes in 1835: "To speak with perhaps ill-bred candour, I like as well to fancy you *not* preaching to Unitarians a gospel after their heart. I will say, farther, that you are the only man I ever met with of that persuasion whom I could unobstructedly like." Schism seems a dreadful thing even to a Schismatic. It has always been very hard in England to be a Nonconformist. It has demanded an effort, and was felt to be a cutting yourself off, not from the fountains of holiness, but from the main currents of secular, national life. Hence it happens that the Church of England can still rejoice in the membership of such men as Lord Avebury and others who could be named. There was never any difficulty about being a Nonconformist in the States. Indeed, Emerson somewhere declares that whoso would be a man must be a Nonconformist.

It was therefore in the Unitarian creed that Emerson was nurtured from the beginning. He took things easily from the first. He came, however, of a race of preachers and religious professors on both the spear and the spindle side. His ancestors were grave men, accustomed to be saluted in the market-place and listened to in the meeting-house. In 1838 Emerson said:

> Two inestimable advantages Christianity has given us: first, the Sabbath, the jubilee of the whole world, everywhere

suggesting even to the vile the dignity of spiritual being. And secondly, the institution of preaching—the speech of man to men—essentially the most flexible of all organs. What hinders that now everywhere, in pulpits, in lecture-rooms, in houses, in fields, wherever the invitations of men or your own occasions lead you, you speak the very truth, as your life and conscience teach it, and cheer the waiting, fainting hearts of men with new hope, new revelation?

Sundays and Sermons! This is indeed to view Christianity from a manse-window.

Though Emerson did not long remain a Unitarian minister, and soon ceased to be "the Rev. R. W. Emerson" he was ever a preacher and remained a sabbatical man to the end of the chapter. He inherited the quiet assumptions of the pastor. He was not a Scholar, or an Historian, or a Critic, or a Publicist, but a grave teacher in prose and tuneless verse of men and women who were willing to listen to him in the quiet reflective hours of life.

I need not dwell upon Emerson's reasons for quitting the ministry in 1832. They are known to you all and easily understood. His hold upon any possible form of organised Christianity was ever of the slightest. No ecclesiastical tradition, however liberal its hue, save the quiet Sunday and the written discourse, appealed to him in the very least. Authority had neither charm nor terror for him. History played a very small part in Emerson's religion. He grazed his soul on all pastures and found one as good as another.

> From air and ocean bring me foods,
> From all zones and altitudes.

And again, he exclaims with obvious sincerity:

> One accent of the Holy Ghost
> The heedless world hath never lost.
> I know what say the Fathers wise—
> The Book itself before me lies,

Old Chrysostom, best Augustine,
And he who blent both in his line,
The younger Golden Lips or mines,
Taylor, the Shakespeare of divines.
His words are music in my ear
I see his cowlèd portrait dear—
And yet, for all his faith could see,
I would not the good bishop be.

What a bewildering planet to live on is this world, where two such men as Emerson and Newman were alive at the same moment of time, one in Boston, Mass., the other in Oxford, slowly qualifying themselves to become leaders of the thoughts of the luckless, vagrant, race of man. Shepherds they were both, out on the hillside penning their flocks in very different folds.

In 1833 Emerson came to Europe for the first time and paid his famous call upon Carlyle, then an unknown man, at Craigenputtock. Just before Emerson's arrival, unannounced and a perfect stranger, Carlyle had made the following entry in his diary: "In all times, there is a word which, spoken to men, to the actual generation of men, would thrill their inmost soul. But the way to find that word? The way to speak it when found? *Opus est consulto* with a vengeance."

Both Carlyle and his visitor were to find the word and to speak it to actual generations of men.

In 1834 Emerson settled himself in Concord, the home of his forefathers, and there he lived, suffering the ordinary fate of mortals, until the end came in 1882.

In the "Thirties," Boston was at least as agitated as Oxford, and better fitted to give a hearing to Tracts *for* and not *against* the Times. In Oxford, the objective of attack was a barren, faithless,

Churchmanship, and what was to be made alive was the Idea of the Church as a Living Witness to the Truth, an authoritative Voice which if appealed to, would answer as surely as of old on Sinai or at Pentecost. In Boston what was attacked was a barren, stagnant Socinianism, and what was to be restored was the Temple of the Living God in the soul of man. Oxford looked regretfully back upon the Fourth Century, and Boston enthusiastically forward to the unfolding of future mysteries.

> The rounded world is fair to see,
> Nine times folded in mystery:
> Though baffled seers cannot impart
> The secret of its labouring heart—
> Throb thine, with Nature's throbbing breast,
> And all is clear from East to West.
> Spirit that lurks each form within
> Beckons to spirit of its kin;
> Self-kindled every atom glows
> And hints the future which it owes.

It is idle to laugh and ridiculous to sneer at thought-movements. They are the only things that matter—the dynamic force that constitutes the fascination of history. What heavy fun the *Edinburgh Review* and the London wits and diners-out poked at the Tractarians—but there is not to-day a parish church in England which does not bear witness to the strength and reality of that movement. So too the Transcendentalism of Boston was a living force, a second spring. "For the winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land."

Emerson's famous oration delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge on the 31st August, 1837, though not by any means the beginning of the movement, was, says Mr. Lowell, "an

event without any former parallel in our literary annals, a scene to be always treasured in the memory for its picturesqueness and its inspiration. What crowded and breathless aisles, what windows clustering with eager heads, what enthusiasm of approval, what grim silence of foregone dissent! It was our Yankee version of a lecture by Abelard, our Harvard parallel to the last public appearance of Schelling."[1]

And in another place Mr. Lowell wrote of Emerson:

I can never help applying to him what Ben Jonson said of Bacon: "There happened in my time one noble speaker who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language was nobly censorious. No man ever spake more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough or look aside from him without loss. He commanded where he spoke." Those who heard him while their natures were yet plastic and their mental nerves trembled under the slightest breath of divine air will never cease to feel and say:

"Was never eye did see that face,
Was never ear did hear that tongue,
Was never mind did mind his grace,
That ever thought the travail long;
But eyes, and ears, and every thought
Were with his sweet perfections caught."[2]

That there were some queer folk, odd fishes among these Transcendentalists we know from Emerson himself, for in his lecture on "New England Reformers," read on Sunday the 3rd of March, 1844, he has been good enough to give us a highly humorous account of some of them.

Whoever has had opportunity of acquaintance with society in New England during the last twenty-five years, with those

[1] *My Study Windows*—"Thoreau."
[2] *My Study Windows*—"Emerson the Lecturer."

middle and with those leading sections that may constitute any just representation of the character and aim of the community, will have been struck with the great activity of thought and experimenting. His attention must be commanded by the signs that the church or religious party is falling from the church nominal, and is appearing in temperance and non-resistance societies, in movements of abolitionists and of socialists, and in very significant assemblies called Sabbath and Bible Conventions, composed of ultraists, of seekers, of all the soul of the soldiery of dissent, and meeting to call in question the authority of the Sabbath, of the priesthood and of the church. In these movements nothing was more remarkable than the discontent they begot in the movers. The spirit of protest and of detachment drove the members of these conventions to bear testimony against the church, and immediately afterward to declare their discontent with these conventions, their independence of their colleagues and their impatience of the methods whereby they were working. They defied each other like a congress of kings, each of whom had a realm to rule and a way of his own that made concert unprofitable. What a fertility of projects for the salvation of the world! One apostle thought all men should go to farming, and another that no man should buy or sell, that the use of money was the cardinal evil; another that the mischief was in our diet, that we eat and drink damnation. These made unleavened bread and were foes to the death to fermentation. It was in vain urged by the housewife that God made yeast as well as dough and loves fermentation just as dearly as he loves vegetation; that fermentation develops the saccharine element in the grain and makes it more palatable and more digestible. No; they wish the pure wheat, and will die but it shall not ferment. Stop, dear nature, these incessant advances of thine: let us scotch these ever-rolling wheels! Others attacked the system of agriculture, the use of animal manures in farming, and the tyranny of man over brute nature: these abuses polluted his food. The ox must be taken from the plough, and the horse from the cart, the hundred acres of the farm must be spaded, and the man must walk wherever boats and locomotives will not carry him. Even the insect world was to be defended—that had been too long neglected, and a society for the protection of ground-worms, slugs and mosquitoes was to be incorporated without delay. With these appeared the adepts of homœopathy, of hydropathy, of mesmerism, of phrenology, and their wonderful theories of the Christian miracles. Others assailed particular vocations, as that of the lawyer, that of the merchant, of the manufacturer, of the clergyman, of the scholar. Others attacked the institution of marriage, as the fountain of social

evils. Others devoted themselves to the worrying of churches and meetings for public worship; and the fertile forms of antinomianism among the elder puritans seemed to have their match in the plenty of the new harvest of reform.

Four years earlier he had written to Carlyle in the same strain. "We are all a little wild here with numberless projects of social reform. Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket. I am gently mad myself and am resolved to live cleanly. George Ripley is talking up a colony of agriculturists and scholars with whom he threatens to take the field and the book. One man renounces the use of animal food, and another of coin, and another of domestic hired service, and another of the State; and on the whole we have a commendable share of reason and hope."

The dogmatism of Idealists is often as intense as that of Agnostics. Mr. Wendell, in his *History* already referred to, tells a story of a Bostonian educated fifty years ago under Transcendental influences, but now (so Mr. Wendell assures us) an earnest Christian, who only the other day remarked with perfect gravity and in tones of deep settled conviction that of course no one doubted that Human Nature was quadruple, consisting of Mind, Body, Soul and Spirit. He had heard of the existence of this *partie carrée* in his early enthusiastic days and had never thought of questioning it or even of asking what it meant. All of us, I expect, have had experience of the immovable dogmatism of the unorthodox.

This kind of thing made Carlyle very uneasy, characteristically uneasy. He wrote in 1842: "I love your *Dial*, and yet it is with a kind of shudder. You seem to me to be in danger of dividing your-

self from the Fact of this present Universe in which alone, ugly as it is, can I find any anchorage, and soaring away after Ideas, Beliefs, Revelations, and such like, into perilous altitudes as I think. . . . Surely I could wish to see you *returned* into your own poor nineteenth century, its follies and maladies, its blind or half-blind but gigantic toilings, its laughter and its tears, and trying to evolve in some measure the hidden Godlike that lies in *it*—that seems to me the kind of feat for literary men."

Emerson replies in an easy vein. "For the *Dial* and its sins I have no defence to set up. We write as we can and we know very little about it. If the direction of these speculations is to be deplored, it is yet a fact for literary history that all the bright boys and girls in New England, quite ignorant of each other, take the world so and come and make confessions to fathers and mothers—the boys that they do not wish to go into trade, the girls that they do not like morning calls and evening parties. They are all religious, but hate the Churches; they reject all the ways of living of other men, but have none to offer in their stead. Perhaps one of these days a great Yankee shall come who will easily do the unknown deed."

Carlyle remained uncomfortable. He dreaded a sect. He writes: "Sect founders withal are a class I do not like. No truly great man from Jesus Christ downwards ever founded a sect—I mean wilfully intended founding one."

There was no real need for Carlyle's anxiety. Emerson was not a Yankee for naught. No saner man, not even the author of *The Blithedale Romance*, ever drew breath in New England. Indeed, Emerson

sometimes handles the mysteries of our Birth and State, the very Infinite itself, with a coolness of temper and stiffness of an unbendable knee that one of his countrymen has characterised as "serene insolence," and to many readers has seemed irreverent. I do not think either insolence or irreverence is an applicable word, always supposing that you concede to Emerson his position. We should all respect, or appear to respect, each other's convictions, or lack of convictions; but why should a man who never goes to Court wear a Court suit in his own dining-room, or walk out backwards in front of an empty chair?

I turn now from the man and his environment to the things he said—for it must not be forgotten that to those who have to live the best part of their lives in the twentieth century, it is what Emerson said that matters most. We can no more hear his rich baritone, deliberate utterance, and "closely filed" speech than we can watch the spare form of Newman glide into the pulpit of St. Mary's. This is a Centenary Celebration of Emerson's birth. A hundred years of recorded time in certain aspects of things is nothing; in others it is a great deal. To our children, Carlyle, Newman, Emerson, Browning can never be what they have been to us. To them they are books in a row—in uniform editions; the dates of original publication, once so full of spiritual significance, for ever obliterated. What are the 1827's, the '33's, the '41's, the '45's, the '59's to careless youngsters born in the '70's and '80's?

> Nothing can be, as it has been before—
> Better—so call it—only not the same.

Our children want to know the upshot of it all —what it comes to. I have sometimes felt a sneaking sympathy with the pert Cantab. who, being urged to read *Paradise Lost*, inquired as a preliminary what it proved? Great poets are perhaps entitled to exemption from such interrogatories, but dead preachers, orators, and the whole tribe of deceased ethical gentlemen must not grumble in their graves if succeeding generations, pressed and harried by their own environments, with the glowing spell of the imperious present upon their cheeks, do not make a very patient congregation.

What then, we must ask, are Emerson's dominant Ideas? What does he say, not to the Boston of 1837, but to-day, to the great restless world of readers, both here and in America?

The mention of America at once emphasises a difference. In America this Centenary of Emerson's birth is a National Event. Was Emerson not the author of the hymn sung at the completion of the Concord Monument on April 19th, 1836?

> By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
> Their flag to April's breeze unfurl'd,
> Here once the embattled farmers stood,
> And fired the shot heard round the world.

We are assured by those who ought to know, that Emerson is now recognised as a leader of American thought. The 25th of May, 1903, was a red-letter day in the States. This is what happened:

> Harvard University does homage to its most illustrious graduate by a unique commemoration service. The corner-stone of the Emerson Memorial Hall for the Department of Philosophy, for which a sum of £30,000 was subscribed, will be laid. The Society of Authors give a dinner of five hundred in New York, to which guests and speakers come from all parts. There will be a memorial observance to-night at Concord, organised by a citizens' committee, with an address

by the President-Elect of Harvard, followed to-morrow by ceremonies at the same town and speeches by Senator Hoar, Charles Eliot Norton, and others. In Boston the free religious association of which Emerson was one of the founders devotes a session of its annual convention to the consideration of his religious influence. Its Emerson Memorial Conference will occupy three weeks of July with morning sessions at Concord and evening sessions at Boston. Thirty lectures are to be given and special Sunday services held. In all these all living friends of Emerson and all his most eminent disciples take part.—*The "Times" Correspondent.*

The Press—that is, what men write in newspapers—has acclaimed Emerson a great thinker, a great author, and a great citizen.

This is all as it should be. Let us not inquire too curiously how much it really means. It is in any case a tribute paid to the things of the Spirit by the things of the Flesh.

In America Emerson stands for much. He was an Emancipator, not of black bodies but of the minds of white men. He spoke right out with fearless indifference. He was never afraid of what is called "public opinion." His fine old Calvinistic aunt, Miss Mary Moody Emerson, used to tell him when he was a little boy, "Do what you are afraid to do." What words are these in the Essay on *Character*?

> We boast our emancipation from many superstitions; but if we have broken any idols, it is through a transfer of the idolatry. What have I gained that I no longer immolate a bull to Jove, or to Neptune, or a mouse to Hecate; that I do not tremble before the Eumenides, or the Catholic Purgatory, or the Calvinistic Judgment-day,—if I quake at opinion, the public opinion as we call it; or at the threat of assault, or contumely, or bad neighbours, or poverty, or mutilation, or at the rumour of revolution or of murder? If I quake, what matters it what I quake at?

Emerson was indeed what Carlyle declared him to be, an era in his great country, and it is only

right and noble that he should take his place among the names and memories that help to make and keep a nation great by making it self-respecting.

I think I notice a supersensitive spirit abroad just now in the States which is apt to resent foreign criticism of native products. Even praise is a little resented. Hawthorne, I have been told, has suffered in popularity in America because he is so beloved in England. After all, Englishmen cannot help understanding the language in which Americans write their books. Anything more alien to the serene cosmopolitanism of Emerson, the least parochial of Anglo-Saxons, than this distortion of patriotism, could hardly be discovered. Criticism, seldom easy, becomes in these circumstances almost dangerous.

In England and to Englishmen Emerson cannot be what he is in America and to Americans. His Centenary is not a national event, but his notes, his dominant ideas, the things he said, still arrest attention.

His fearlessness, his speaking his mind right out, his careless indifference to what people would say, is a quality far from characteristic of our own writers of to-day. Let us do obeisance to it here—let us admire it, envy it, imitate it, if we dare.

Of Emerson's optimism, his far-famed optimism —what is to be said? Here was a man who did not believe in Hell. It is most irritating; it made Carlyle furious. Emerson argues it out with you bravely and tenaciously. You cannot shake him off. You must listen to him.

> Nothing shall warp me from the belief that every man is a lover of truth. There is no pure lie, no pure malignity in

nature. The entertainment of the proposition of depravity is the last profligacy and profanation. There is no scepticism, no atheism but that. Could it be received into common belief, suicide would unpeople the planet. It has had a name to live in some dogmatic theology, but each man's innocence and his real liking of his neighbour have kept it a dead letter. I remember standing at the polls one day when the anger of the political contest gave a certain grimness to the faces of the independent electors, and a good man at my side looking on the people remarked, "I am satisfied that the largest part of these men on either side mean to vote right." I suppose considerate observers looking at the masses of men in their blameless and in their equivocal actions will assent that in spite of selfishness and frivolity the general purpose in the great number of persons is fidelity. The reason why anyone refuses his assent to your opinion or his aid to your benevolent design is in you. He refuses to accept you as a bringer of truth because, though you think you have it, he feels that you have it not. You have not given him the authentic sign. (*New England Reformers.*)

In an even bolder strain, in his Essay on Montaigne, perhaps Emerson's favourite author, he says: "The Divine effort is never relaxed; the carrion in the sun will convert itself to grass and flowers, and man, though in brothels, or jails, or on gibbets, is on his way to all that is good and true."

This may not be convincing, but it is very Emersonian.

On what basis does this invincible optimism rest? On Emerson's theory of *compensation* which is now often dismissed as a whim, a fad, a fancy—but is nothing of the kind; it is the pulse of the machine. Wipe it out, and Emerson is wiped out save as a mere phrase-monger. Listen to him for yourselves:

Ever since I was a boy I have wished to write a discourse on Compensation; for it seemed to me, when very young, that on this subject Life was ahead of Theology, and the people knew more than the preachers taught.

But what is Compensation?

Every excess causes a defect; every defect, an excess. Every sweet has its sour; every evil, its good. Every faculty which is a receiver of pleasure has an equal penalty put on its abuse. It is to answer for its moderation with its life. For everything you have missed, you have gained something else; and for everything you gain, you lose something. If riches increase, they are increased that use them. If the gatherer gathers too much, nature takes out of the man what she puts into his chest; swells the estate, but kills the owner. There is always some levelling circumstance that puts down the overbearing, the strong, the rich, the fortunate, substantially on the same ground with all others. . . .

The farmer imagines power and place are fine things. But the President has paid dear for his White House. It has commonly cost him all his peace, and the best of his manly attributes. . . .

Things refuse to be mismanaged long. Though no checks to a new evil appear, the checks exist and will appear. If the government is cruel, the governor's life is not safe. If you tax too high, the revenue will yield nothing. If you make the criminal code sanguinary, juries will not convict. Under all governments the influence of character remains the same —in Turkey and in New England about alike.

These latter remarks might be bits of Johnson's conversation reported by Boswell. But the next extract is in another mould:

Thus is the universe alive. All things are moral. That soul, which within us is a sentiment, outside of us is a law. It is almighty. All nature feels its grasp. It is eternal, but enacts itself in time and space. Justice is not postponed. The world, like a multiplication table, turn it how you will, balances itself. Take what figure you will, its exact value still returns to you. Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed. . . . Always pay; for, first or last, you must pay your entire debt. Persons and events may stand for a time between you and justice, but it is only a postponement. You must pay at last your own debt. . . . The thief steals from himself; the swindler swindles himself.

This is the Emersonian doctrine of Compensation.

Before everything else Emerson was a fearless, convinced optimist whose optimism rested on his

belief in the inviolable, the unconquerable spirit of Man, independent of time, place and circumstance.

> Christian and Pagan—king and slave,
> Soldier and Anchorite,
> Distinctions we esteem so grave
> Were nothing in his sight.

Man's true spirit, according to Emerson, can never be dishonoured by the most unhallowed events. In the end it will emerge clean and holy. "Herein," says he, "I rejoice with a serene eternal peace." Serenity, Eternity, Peace. This is Emerson and from it follows inevitably his Individualism. In every fibre of his mind Emerson was an Individualist. This may not be the popular creed to-day—but it was Emerson's. He lived in an age of associations—of groups, of schemes and plans to be worked out in concert. Given a host of miserable units—add them all together and the total is happiness. Emerson's hardy optimism rejected this as scornfully as did Leopardi's black pessimism. The Italian wrote in his biting way:

> The lofty spirits of my century have discovered a new counsel, for not being able to make happy on earth any one person, they ignored the individual and gave themselves to seek universal felicity, and of a multitude, singly sad and wretched, they make a joyous and happy people.

What does Emerson say?

> Friendship and association are very fine things, and a grand phalanx of the best of the human race, banded for some catholic object. Yes, excellent—but remember that no society can ever be so large as one man.

And again in the same essay, on *New England Reformers*:

> I do not wonder at the interest these projects inspire. The world is awakening to the idea of union and these experiments show what it is thinking of. It is, and will be magic. Men

will live and communicate, and plough, and reap, and govern, as by added ethereal power, when once they are united. . . . But this union must be inward and not one of covenants, and is to be reached by a reverse of the methods they use. The union is only perfect when all the uniters are isolated. It is the union of friends who live in different streets or towns. Each man, if he attempts to join himself to others, is on all sides cramped and diminished of his proportion; and the stricter the union the smaller and the more pitiful he is.

Again in the same essay:

Many a reformer perishes in his removal of rubbish—and that makes the offensiveness of the class. They are partial—they are not equal to the work they pretend; and they lose their way—in the assault on the kingdom of darkness, they expend all their energy on some accidental evil, and lose their sanity and power of benefit. It is of little moment that one or two or twenty errors of our social system be corrected, but of much that the man be in his senses.

Here is plainly revealed Emerson the Emancipator—the man who would have men be free. It is an old cry this for freedom:

> There is no man free in all this world,
> Slaves of possession, slaves of fortune, hurl'd
> This way and that—or else the multitude
> Hath hold on him, or love, and stone and wood
> Constrain, and will not let him see the soul
> Within him. So, thou dur'st not, and thine whole
> Thought hangs on what the herd will say.

It is Euripides who speaks, through the mouth of Hecuba. The English is Mr. Gilbert Murray's.

Of Theology, strictly so called, Emerson had none. This may as well be admitted at once. In this respect he shared the plight of Carlyle and Matthew Arnold.

It makes no difference whether the appeal is to numbers or to one. The faith that stands on authority is not faith. The reliance on authority measures the decline of religion, the withdrawal of the soul. The position men have given to Jesus, now for many centuries of history, is a position of authority. It characterises themselves. It cannot alter the

eternal facts. Before the immense possibilities of man, all mere experience, all past biography, however spotless and sainted, shrinks away. (*The Over-Soul.*)

In another place Emerson says:

If a man claims to know and speak of God, and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country in another world, believe him not. Whence this worship of the past? The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soul. . . . History is an impertinence and an injury if it be anything more than a cheerful apologue or parable of my being and becoming. . . . As men's prayers are a disease of the will so are their creeds a disease of the intellect. (*On Self-Reliance.*)

You cannot, I repeat, however dogmatically inclined, construct a theology out of Emerson.

How really Emerson stands in America to-day I do not know. Unitarianism, so at least Dr. Holmes says, is no longer dominant in Boston. A mild Episcopalianism reigns in its stead. Anything less like Emerson than a mild Episcopalianism it would be hard to fancy. But it may well be there has been another change since Dr. Holmes wrote his life of Emerson.

The America of to-day is certainly not the America of Emerson's Boston hymns and songs.

Old Europe groans with palaces,
  Has lords enough and more—
We plant and build by foaming seas
  A city of the poor.

. . . .

God said "I'm tired of kings,
  I suffer them no more;
Up to my ear the morning brings
  The outrage of the poor.

. . . .

"I will divide my goods;
  Call in the wretch and slave:
None shall rule but the humble,
  And none but Toil shall have."

It would be cruel to quote any more of what I am sure the Press, its new-born admiration for Emerson notwithstanding, would call "rant" or "fustian."

Social unrest haunts both worlds. Fear sits at the bottom of men's hearts. "Society," said Emerson, "is devoured by a secret melancholy which breaks through all its smiles and all its gaiety and games." Society is still devoured by this same melancholy. The nations dwell behind barricades forging fresh weapons of offence. Great guns and hostile tariffs have lost none of their vogue. If ever Freedom shrieked aloud she might be expected to do so to-day. It is hard to be an optimist on the 2nd of June, 1903.

At no time did the luckless race of man stand more in need of Emerson's spirit than to-day. His splendid courage, his undying hope, his cheerfulness, his fixed determination to quake at nothing, his spiritual independence, his serenity, his peace, are all possessions we would were ours.

> O air-born voice, long since, serenely clear,
> A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear—
> Resolve to be thyself, and know that he
> Who finds himself, loses his misery.

GEORGE BORROW

1892

MR. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, in his delightful *Memories and Portraits*, takes occasion to tell us, amongst a good many other things of the sort, that he has a great fancy for *The Bible in Spain*, by Mr. George Borrow. He has not, indeed, read it quite so often as he has Mr. George Meredith's *Egoist*, but still he is very fond of it. It is interesting to know this, interesting, that is, to the great Clan Stevenson who owe suit and service to their liege-lord; but so far as Borrow is concerned, it does not matter, to speak frankly, two straws. The author of *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, *The Bible in Spain*, and *Wild Wales* is one of those kings of literature who never need to number their tribe. His personality will always secure him an attendant company, who, when he pipes, must dance. A queer company it is too, even as was the company he kept himself, composed as it is of saints and sinners, gentle and simple, master and man, mistresses and maids; of those who, learned in the tongues, have read everything else, and of those who have read nothing else and do not want to. People there are for whom Borrow's books play the same part as did horses and dogs for the gentleman in the tall white hat whom David Copperfield met on the top of the Canterbury coach. "'Orses and dorgs," said that

gentleman, " is some men's fancy. They are wittles and drink to me, lodging, wife and children, reading, writing, and 'rithmetic, snuff, tobacker, and sleep."

Nothing, indeed, is more disagreeable, even offensive, than to have anybody else's favourite author thrust down your throat. " Love me, love my dog," is a maxim of behaviour which deserves all the odium Charles Lamb has heaped upon it. Still, it would be hard to go through life arm-in-arm with anyone who had stuck in the middle of *Guy Mannering*, or had bidden a final farewell to Jeannie Deans in the barn with the robbers near Gunnerly Hill in Lincolnshire. But, oddly enough, Borrow excites no such feelings. It is quite possible to live amicably in the same house with a person who has stuck hopelessly in the middle of *Wild Wales*, and who braves it out (what impudence!) by the assertion that the book is full of things like this: " Nothing worthy of commemoration took place during the two following days, save that myself and family took an evening walk on the Wednesday up the side of the Berwyn, for the purpose of botanising, in which we were attended by John Jones. There, amongst other plants, we found a curious moss which our good friend said was called in Welsh ' corn carw,' or deer's horn, and which he said the deer were very fond of. On the Thursday he and I started on an expedition on foot to Ruthyn, distant about fourteen miles, proposing to return in the evening."

The book *is* full of things like this, and must be pronounced as arrant a bit of book-making as ever was. But judgment is not always followed

by execution, and a more mirth-provoking error can hardly be imagined than for anyone to suppose that the admission of the fact—sometimes doubtless a damaging fact—namely, book-making, will for one moment shake the faithful in their certitude that *Wild Wales* is a delightful book; not so delightful, indeed, as *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, or *The Bible in Spain*, but still delightful because issuing from the same mint as they, stamped with the same physiognomy, and bearing the same bewitching inscription.

It is a mercy the people we love do not know how much we must forgive them. Oh the liberties they would take, the things they would do, were it to be revealed to them that their roots have gone far too deep into our soil for us to disturb them under any provocation whatsoever!

George Borrow has to be forgiven a great deal. The Appendix to *The Romany Rye* contains an assault upon the memory of Sir Walter Scott, of which every word is a blow. It is savage, cruel, unjustifiable. There is just enough of what base men call truth in it, to make it one of the most powerful bits of devil's advocacy ever penned. Had another than Borrow written thus of the good Sir Walter, some men would travel far to spit upon his tomb. Quick and easy would have been his descent to the Avernus of oblivion. His books, torn from the shelf, should have long stood neglected in the shop of the second-hand, till the hour came for them to seek the stall, where, exposed to wind and weather, they should dolefully await the sack of the paper-merchant, whose holy office it should be to mash them into eternal pulp. But

what rodomontade is this! No books are more, in the vile phrase of the craft, "esteemed" than Borrow's. The prices demanded for the early editions already impinge upon the absurd, and are steadily rising. The fact is, there is no use blinking it, mankind cannot afford to quarrel with George Borrow, and will not do so. It is bad enough what he did, but when we remember that whatever he had done, we must have forgiven him all the same, it is just possible to thank Heaven (feebly) that it was no worse. He might have robbed a church!

Borrow is indeed one of those lucky men who, in Bagehot's happy phrase, "keep their own atmosphere," and as a consequence, when in the destined hour the born Borrovian—for men are born Borrovians, not made—takes up a volume of him, in ten minutes (unless it be *Wild Wales*, and then twenty must be allowed) the victory is won; down tumbles the standard of Respectability which through a virtuous and perhaps long life has braved the battle and the breeze; up flutters the lawless pennon of the Romany Chal, and away skims the reader's craft over seas, hitherto untravelled, in search of adventures, manifold and marvellous, nor in vain.

If one was in search of a single epithet most properly descriptive of Borrow's effect upon his reader, perhaps it would best be found in the word "contagious." He is one of the most "catching" of our authors. The most inconsistent of men, he compels those who are born subject to his charm to share his inconsistencies. He was an agent of the Bible Society, and his extraordinary adventures in Spain were encountered, so at least his

title-page would have us believe, in an attempt to circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula. He was a sound Churchman, and would have nothing to do with Dissent, even in Wild Wales, but he had also a passion for the ring. Mark his devastations. It is as bad as the pestilence. A gentle lady, bred amongst the Quakers, a hater of physical force, with eyes brimful of mercy, was lately heard to say, in heightened tones, at a dinner-table, where the subject of momentary conversation was a late prize-fight: "Oh! pity was it that ever corruption should have crept in amongst them." "Amongst whom?" inquired her immediate neighbour. "Amongst the bruisers of England," was the terrific rejoinder. Deep were her blushes—and yet how easy to forgive her! The gentle lady spoke as one does in dreams; for, you must know, she was born a Borrovian, and only that afternoon had read for the first time the famous twenty-sixth chapter of *Lavengro*:

> But what a bold and vigorous aspect pugilism wore at that time! And the great battle was just then coming off; the day had been decided upon, and the spot—a convenient distance from the old town (Norwich); and to the old town were now flocking the bruisers of England, men of tremendous renown. Let no one sneer at the bruisers of England; what were the gladiators of Rome, or the bull-fighters of Spain, in its palmiest days, compared to England's bruisers? Pity that ever corruption should have crept in amongst them—but of that I wish not to talk. There they come, the bruisers, from far London, or from wherever else they might chance to be at the time, to the great rendezvous in the old city; some came one way, some another: some of tip-top reputation came with peers in their chariots, for glory and fame are such fair things that even peers are proud to have those invested therewith by their sides; others came in their own gigs, driving their own bits of blood; and I heard one say: "I have driven through at a heat the whole hundred and eleven miles, and only stopped to bait twice!" Oh, the blood-horses of old

England! but they too have had their day—for everything beneath the sun there is a season and a time. . . . So the bruisers of England are come to be present at the grand fight speedily coming off; there they are met in the precincts of the old town, near the field of the chapel, planted with tender saplings at the restoration of sporting Charles, which are now become venerable elms, as high as many a steeple; there they are met at a fitting rendezvous, where a retired coachman with one leg keeps an hotel and a bowling-green. I think I now see them upon the bowling-green, the men of renown, amidst hundreds of people with no renown at all, who gaze upon them with timid wonder. Fame, after all, is a glorious thing, though it lasts only for a day. There's Cribb, the champion of England, and perhaps the best man in England —there he is, with his huge, massive figure, and face wonderfully like that of a lion. There is Belcher the younger—not the mighty one, who is gone to his place, but the Teucer Belcher, the most scientific pugilist that ever entered a ring, only wanting strength to be—I won't say what. . . . But how shall I name them all? They were there by dozens, and all tremendous in their way. There was Bulldog Hudson and fearless Scroggins, who beat the conqueror of Sam the Jew. There was Black Richmond—no, he was not there, but I knew him well. He was the most dangerous of blacks, even with a broken thigh. There was Purcell, who could never conquer till all seemed over with him. There was—what! shall I name thee last? Ay, why not? I believe that thou art the last of all that strong family still above the sod, where mayst thou long continue—true piece of English stuff, Tom of Bedford, sharp as Winter, kind as Spring!

No wonder the gentle lady was undone. It is as good as Homer.

Diderot, it will be remembered, once wrote a celebrated eulogium on Richardson, which some have thought exaggerated, because he says in it that, on the happening of certain events, in themselves improbable, he would keep *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles* on the same shelf with the writings of Moses, Homer, Euripides, and Sophocles. Why a literary man should not be allowed to arrange his library as he chooses, without being exposed to so awful a charge as that of exaggeration, it

is hard to say. But no doubt the whole eulogium is pitched in too high a key for modern ears; still, it contains sensible remarks, amongst them this one: that he had observed that in a company where the writings of Richardson were being read, either privately or aloud, the conversation became at once interesting and animated. Books cannot be subjected to a truer test. Will they bear talking about? A parcel of friends can talk about Borrow's books for ever. The death of his father, as told in the last chapter of *Lavengro*. Is there anything of the kind more affecting in the library? Somebody is almost sure to say, "Yes, the death of Le Fevre in *Tristram Shandy*." A third, who always (provoking creature) likes best what she read last, will wax eloquent over the death of the little princess in Tolstoi's great book. The character-sketch of Borrow's elder brother, the self-abnegating artist who declined to paint the portrait of the Mayor of Norwich because he thought a friend of his could do it better, suggests De Quincey's marvellous sketch of his elder brother. And then, what about Benedict Moll, Joey the dog-fancier of Westminster, and that odious wretch the London publisher? You had need to be a deaf mute to avoid taking part in a conversation like this. Who was Mary Fulcher? All the clocks in the parish will have struck midnight before that question has been answered. It is not to take a gloomy view of the world to say that there are few pleasanter things in it than a good talk about George Borrow.

For invalids and delicate persons leading retired lives, there are no books like Borrow's. Lassitude

and Languor, horrid hags, simply pick up their trailing skirts and scuttle out of any room into which he enters. They cannot abide him. A single chapter of Borrow is air and exercise; and, indeed, the exercise is not always gentle. "I feel," said an invalid, laying down *The Bible in Spain*, as she spoke, upon the counterpane, "as if I had been gesticulating violently for the space of two hours." She then sank into deep sleep, and is now hale and hearty. Miss Martineau, in her *Life in the Sick Room*, invokes a blessing upon the head of Christopher North. But there were always those who refused to believe in Miss Martineau's illness, and certainly her avowed preference for the man whom Macaulay in his wrath, writing to Napier in Edinburgh, called "your grog-drinking, cock-fighting, cudgel-playing Professor of Moral Philosophy," is calculated to give countenance to this unworthy suspicion. It was an odd taste for an invalid who, whilst craving for vigour, must necessarily hate noise. Borrow is a vigorous writer, Wilson a noisy one. It was, however, his *Recreations*, and not the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, that Miss Martineau affected. Still the *Recreations* are noisy too, and Miss Martineau must find her best excuse, and I am determined to find an excuse for her—for did she not write the *Feats on the Fiord*?—in the fact that when she wrote her *Life in the Sick Room* (a pleasant little book to read when in rude health), Borrow had published nothing of note. Had he done so, she would have been of my way of thinking.

How much of Borrow is true and how much is false, is one of those questions which might easily set all mankind by the ears, but for the pleasing

circumstance that it does not matter a dump. Few things are more comical than to hear some douce body, unread in Borrow, gravely inquiring how far his word may be relied upon. The sole possible response takes the exceptionable shape of loud peals of laughter. And yet, surely, it is a most reasonable question, or query, as the Scotch say. So it is; but after you have read your author you won't ask it—you won't want to. The reader can believe what he likes, and as much as he likes. In the old woman on London Bridge and her convict son, in the man in black (how unlike Goldsmith's!), in the *Flaming Tinman*, in Ursula, the wife of Sylvester. There is but one person in whom you must believe, every hour of the day and of the night, else you are indeed unworthy—you must believe in Isopel Berners. A stranger and more pathetic figure than she is not to be seen flitting about in the great shadow-dance men call their life. Born and bred though she was in a workhouse, where she learnt to read and sew, fear God, and take her own part, a nobler, more lovable woman never crossed man's path. Her introduction to her historian was quaint. "Before I could put myself on my guard, she struck me a blow on the face, which had nearly brought me to the ground." Alas, poor Isopel! Borrow returned the blow, a deadlier, fiercer blow, aimed not at the face but at the heart. Of their life in the Dingle let no man speak; it must be read in the last chapters of *Lavengro* and the early ones of *The Romany Rye*. Borrow was certainly irritating. One longs to shake him. He was what children call "a tease." He teased poor Isopel with his confounded

philology. Whether he simply made a mistake, or whether the girl was right in her final surmise, that he was "at the root mad," who can say? He offered her his hand, but at too late a stage in the proceedings. Isopel Berners left the Dingle to go to America, and we hear of her no more. That she lived to become a happy "house-mother," and to start a line of brave men and chaste women, must be the prayer of all who know what it is to love a woman they have never seen. Of the strange love-making that went on in the Dingle no idea can or ought to be given save from the original.

Thereupon I descended into the Dingle. Belle was sitting before the fire, at which the kettle was boiling. "Were you waiting for me?" I inquired. "Yes," said Belle, "I thought you would come, and I waited for you." "That was very kind," said I. "Not half so kind," said she, "as it was of you to get everything ready for me in the dead of last night, when there was scarcely a chance of my coming." The tea-things were brought forward, and we sat down. "Have you been far?" said Belle. "Merely to that public-house," said I, "to which you directed me on the second day of our acquaintance." "Young men should not make a habit of visiting public-houses," said Belle; "they are bad places." "They may be so to some people," said I, "but I do not think the worst public-house in England could do me any harm." "Perhaps you are so bad already," said Belle with a smile, "that it would be impossible to spoil you." "How dare you catch at my words?" said I; "come, I will make you pay for doing so—you shall have this evening the longest lesson in Armenian which I have yet inflicted upon you." "You may well say inflicted," said Belle, "but pray spare me. I do not wish to hear anything about Armenian, especially this evening." "Why this evening?" said I. Belle made no answer. "I will not spare you," said I; "this evening I intend to make you conjugate an Armenian verb." "Well, be it so," said Belle, "for this evening you shall command." "To command is hramahyel," said I. "Ram her ill indeed," said Belle, "I do not wish to begin with that." "No," said I, "as we have come to the verbs we will begin regularly: hramahyel is a verb of the second conjugation. We will begin with the first." "First of all, tell me," said Belle, "what a

verb is." "A part of speech," said I, "which, according to the dictionary, signifies some action or passion; for example, 'I command you, or I hate you.'" "I have given you no cause to hate me," said Belle, looking me sorrowfully in the face.

"I was merely giving two examples," said I, "and neither was directed at you. In those examples, to command and hate are verbs. Belle, in Armenian there are four conjugations of verbs; the first ends in al, the second in yel, the third in oul, and the fourth in il. Now, have you understood me?"

"I am afraid, indeed, it will all end ill," said Belle. "Hold your tongue!" said I, "or you will make me lose my patience." "You have already made me nearly lose mine," said Belle. "Let us have no unprofitable interruptions," said I. "The conjugations of the Armenian verbs are neither so numerous nor so difficult as the declensions of the nouns. Hear that and rejoice. Come, we will begin with the verb hntal, a verb of the first conjugation, which signifies to rejoice. Come along: hntam, I rejoice; hntas, thou rejoicest. Why don't you follow, Belle?"

"I am sure I don't rejoice, whatever you may do," said Belle. "The chief difficulty, Belle," said I, "that I find in teaching you the Armenian grammar proceeds from your applying to yourself and me every example I give. Rejoice, in this instance, is merely an example of an Armenian verb of the first conjugation, and has no more to do with your rejoicing than lal, which is also a verb of the first conjugation, and which signifies to weep, would have to do with your weeping, provided I made you conjugate it. Come along: hntam, I rejoice; hntas, thou rejoicest; hnta, he rejoices; hntamk, we rejoice. Now repeat those words." "I can't bear this much longer," said Belle. "Keep yourself quiet," said I. "I wish to be gentle with you, and to convince you, we will skip hntal, and also, for the present, verbs of the first conjugation, and proceed to the second. Belle, I will now select for you to conjugate the prettiest verb in Armenian, not only of the second, but also of all the four conjugations. That verb is siriel. Here is the present tense: siriem, siries, sire, siriemk, sirèlk, sirien. Come on, Belle, and say siriem." Belle hesitated. "Pray oblige me, Belle, by saying siriem." Belle still appeared to hesitate. "You must admit, Belle, that it is softer than hntam." "It is so," said Belle, "and to oblige you I will say siriem." "Very well indeed, Belle," said I, "and now to show you how verbs act upon pronouns in Armenian, I will say siriem zkiez. Please to repeat siriem zkiez." "Siriem zkiez," said Belle; "that last word is very hard to say." "Sorry that you think so, Belle," said I. "Now, please to say siriá zis." Belle did so. "Exceedingly well," said I. "Now say yerani thè sireir zis." "Yerani thè sireir

zis," said Belle. "Capital!" said I. "You have now said, I love you—love me. Ah! would that you would love me!"
"And I have said all these things?" said Belle. "Yes," said I. "You have said them in Armenian." "I would have said them in no language that I understood," said Belle. "And it was very wrong of you to take advantage of my ignorance, "and make me say such things!" "Why so?" said I. "If you said them, I said them too."

"Was ever woman in this humour wooed?"

It is, I believe, the opinion of the best critics that *The Bible in Spain* is Borrow's masterpiece. It very likely is so. At the present moment I feel myself even more than usually disqualified for so grave a consideration, by my overpowering delight in its dear deluding title. A quarter of a century ago, in all decent homes, a boy's reading was, by the stern decree of his elders, divided rigorously, though at the same time it must be admitted crudely, into Sunday books and week-day books. "What have you got there?" has before now been an inquiry addressed on a Sunday afternoon to some youngster, suspiciously engrossed in a book. "Oh, *The Bible in Spain*," would be the reply. "It is written by a Mr. Borrow, you know, and it is all about" (then the title-page would come in useful) "his attempts 'to circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula!'" "Indeed! Sounds most suitable," answers the gulled authority, some foolish sisters' governess or the like illiterate, and moves off. And then the happy boy would wriggle in his chair, and, as if thirsting to taste the first fruits of his wile, hastily seek out a streaky page, and there read, for perhaps the hundredth time, the memorable words:

"Good are the horses of the Moslems," said my old friend; "where will you find such? They will descend rocky

mountains at full speed, and neither trip nor fall; but you must be cautious with the horses of the Moslems, and treat them with kindness, for the horses of the Moslems are proud, and they like not being slaves. When they are young and first mounted, jerk not their mouths with your bit, for be sure if you do, they will kill you; sooner or later, you will perish beneath their feet. Good are our horses, and good our riders. Yea, very good are the Moslems at mounting the horse; who are like them? I once saw a Frank rider compete with a Moslem on this beach, and at first the Frank rider had it all his own way and he passed the Moslem, but the course was long, very long, and the horse of the Frank rider, which was a Frank horse also, panted; but the horse of the Moslem panted not, for he was a Moslem also, and the Moslem rider at last gave a cry, and the horse sprang forward and he overtook the Frank horse, and then the Moslem rider stood up in his saddle. How did he stand? Truly he stood on his head, and these eyes saw him; he stood on his head in the saddle as he passed the Frank rider; and he cried ha! ha! as he passed the Frank rider; and the Moslem horse cried ha! ha! as he passed the Frank breed, and the Frank lost by a far distance. Good are the Franks, good their horses; but better are the Moslems, and better the horses of the Moslems."

That boy, as he lay curled up in his chair, doting over the enchanted page, knew full well, else had he been no Christian boy, that it was not a Sunday book which was making his eyes start out of his head; yet, reckless, he cried, "ha! ha!" and read on, and as he read he blessed the madcap Borrow for having called his romance by the sober-sounding, propitiatory title of *The Bible in Spain*!

Creeds pass, rites change, no altar standeth whole.

In a world of dust and ashes it is a foolish thing to prophesy immortality, or even a long term of years, for any fellow-mortal. Good luck does not usually pursue such predictions. England can boast few keener, better-qualified critics than that admirable woman, Mrs. Barbauld, or, not to dock her of her accustomed sizings, Mrs. Anna Lætitia

Barbauld. And yet what do we find her saying? "The young may melt into tears at *Julia Mandeville* and *The Man of Feeling*, the romantic will shudder at *Udolpho*, but those of mature age who know what human nature is, will take up again and again Dr. Moore's *Zeluco*. One hates to contradict a lady like Mrs. Barbauld, or to speak in terms of depreciation of any work of Mrs. Radcliffe's, whose name is still as a pleasant savour in the nostrils; therefore I will let *Udolpho* alone. As for Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, what was good enough for Sir Walter Scott ought surely to be good enough for us, most days. I am no longer young, and cannot therefore be expected to melt into tears at *Julia Mandeville*, but here my toleration is exhausted. Dr. Moore's *Zeluco* is too much; maturity has many ills to bear, but repeated perusals of this work cannot fairly be included amongst them.

Still, though prediction is to be avoided, it is impossible to feel otherwise than very cheerful about George Borrow. His is a good life. Anyhow, he will outlive most people, and that at all events is a comfort.

ON THE ALLEGED OBSCURITY OF MR. BROWNING'S POETRY

1884

"THE sanity of true genius" was a happy phrase of Charles Lamb's. Our greatest poets were our sanest men. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth might have defied even a mad doctor to prove his worst.

To extol sanity ought to be unnecessary in an age which boasts its realism; but yet it may be doubted whether, if the author of the phrase just quoted were to be allowed once more to visit the world he loved so well and left so reluctantly, and could be induced to forswear his Elizabethans and devote himself to the literature of the day, he would find many books which his fine critical faculty would allow him to pronounce "healthy," as he once pronounced *John Buncle* to be in the presence of a Scotchman, who could not for the life of him understand how a book could properly be said to enjoy either good or bad health.

But, however this may be, this much is certain, that lucidity is one of the chief characteristics of sanity. A sane man ought not to be unintelligible. Lucidity is good everywhere, for all time and in all things, in a letter, in a speech, in a book, in a poem. Lucidity is not simplicity. A lucid poem is not necessarily an easy one. A great poet may

tax our brains, but he ought not to puzzle our wits. We may often have to ask in humility, What *does* he mean? but not in despair, What *can* he mean?

Dreamy and inconclusive the poet sometimes, nay, often, cannot help being, for dreaminess and inconclusiveness are conditions of thought when dwelling on the very subjects that most demand poetical treatment.

Misty, therefore, the poet has our kind permission sometimes to be; but muddy, never! A great poet, like a great peak, must sometimes be allowed to have his head in the clouds, and to disappoint us of the wide prospect we had hoped to gain; but the clouds which envelop him must be attracted to, and not made by him.

In a sentence, though the poet may give expression to what Wordsworth has called "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world," we, the much-enduring public who have to read his poems, are entitled to demand that the unintelligibility of which we are made to feel the weight, should be all of it the world's, and none of it merely the poet's.

We should not have ventured to introduce our subject with such very general and undeniable observations, had not experience taught us that the best way of introducing any subject is by a string of platitudes, delivered after an oracular fashion. They arouse attention, without exhausting it, and afford the pleasant sensation of thinking, without any of the trouble of thought. But, the subject once introduced, it becomes necessary to proceed with it.

In considering whether a poet is intelligible and lucid, we ought not to grope and grub about his work in search of obscurities and oddities, but should, in the first instance at all events, attempt to regard his whole scope and range; to form some estimate, if we can, of his general purport and effect, asking ourselves, for this purpose, such questions as these: How are we the better for him? Has he quickened any passion, lightened any burden, purified any taste? Does he play any real part in our lives? When we are in love, do we whisper him in our lady's ear? When we sorrow, does he ease our pain? Can he calm the strife of mental conflict? Has he had anything to say, which wasn't twaddle, on those subjects which, elude analysis as they may, and defy demonstration as they do, are yet alone of perennial interest:

> On man, on nature, and on human life,

on the pathos of our situation, looking back on to the irrevocable and forward to the unknown? If a poet has said, or done, or been any of these things to an appreciable extent, to charge him with obscurity is both folly and ingratitude.

But the subject may be pursued further, and one may be called upon to investigate this charge with reference to particular books or poems. In Browning's case this fairly may be done; and then another crop of questions arises, such as: What is the book about, *i.e.*, with what subject does it deal, and what method of dealing does it employ? Is it didactical, analytical, or purely narrative? Is it content to describe, or does it aspire to explain? In common fairness these questions must

be asked and answered, before we heave our critical half-bricks at strange poets. One task is of necessity more difficult than another. Students of geometry, who have pushed their researches into that fascinating science so far as the fifth proposition of the first book, commonly called the *Pons Asinorum* (though now that so many ladies read Euclid, it ought, in common justice to them, to be at least sometimes called the *Pons Asinarum*), will agree that though it may be more difficult to prove that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, and that if the equal sides be produced, the angles on the other side of the base shall be equal, than it was to describe an equilateral triangle on a given finite straight line; yet no one but an ass would say that the fifth proposition was one whit less intelligible than the first. When we consider Mr. Browning in his later writings, it will be useful to bear this distinction in mind.

Our first duty, then, is to consider Mr. Browning in his whole scope and range, or, in a word, generally. This is a task of such dimensions and difficulty as, in the language of joint-stock prospectuses, "to transcend individual enterprise," and consequently, as we all know, a company has been recently floated, or a society established, having Mr. Browning for its principal object. It has a president, two secretaries, male and female, and a treasurer. You pay a guinea, and you become a member. A suitable reduction is, I believe, made in the unlikely event of all the members of one family flocking to be enrolled. The existence of this society is a great relief, for it enables us to deal with our unwieldy theme in a light-hearted

manner, and to refer those who have a passion for solid information and profound philosophy to the printed transactions of this learned society, which, lest we should forget all about it, we at once do.

When you are viewing a poet generally, as is our present plight, the first question is: When was he born? The second, When did he (to use a favourite phrase of the last century, now in disuse) —When did he commence author? The third, How long did he keep at it? The fourth, How much has he written? And the fifth may perhaps be best expressed in the words of Southey's little Peterkin:

> "What good came of it all at last?"
> Quoth little Peterkin.

Mr. Browning was born in 1812; he commenced author with the fragment called *Pauline*, published in 1833. He is still writing, and his works, as they stand upon my shelves—for editions vary—number twenty-three volumes. Little Peterkin's question is not so easily answered; but, postponing it for a moment, the answers to the other four show that we have to deal with a poet, more than seventy years old, who has been writing for half a century, and who has filled twenty-three volumes. The Browning Society at all events has assets. The way I propose to deal with this literary mass is to divide it in two, taking the year 1864 as the line of cleavage. In that year the volume called *Dramatis Personæ* was published, and then nothing happened till the year 1868, when our poet presented the astonished English language with the four volumes and the 21,116 lines called *The Ring and the Book*, a poem which it may be stated, for the benefit of that large, increasing, and highly

interesting class of persons who prefer statistics to poetry, is longer than Pope's *Homer's Iliad* by exactly 2171 lines. We thus begin with *Pauline* in 1833, and end with *Dramatis Personæ* in 1864. We then begin again with *The Ring and the Book*, in 1868; but when or where we shall end cannot be stated. *Sordello*, published in 1840, is better treated apart, and is therefore excepted from the first period, to which chronologically it belongs.

Looking then at the first period, we find in its front eight plays:

1. *Strafford*, written in 1836, when its author was twenty-four years old, and put upon the boards of Covent Garden Theatre on the 1st of May, 1837, Macready playing Strafford, and Miss Helen Faucit Lady Carlisle. It was received by all who saw it with enthusiasm; but the company, for reasons unconnected with the play, was rebellious; and after running five nights, the man who played Pym threw up his part, and the theatre was closed.
2. *Pippa Passes.*
3. *King Victor and King Charles.*
4. *The Return of the Druses.*
5. *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon.*

This beautiful and pathetic play was put on the stage of Drury Lane on the 11th of February, 1843, with Phelps as Lord Tresham, Miss Helen Faucit as Mildred Tresham, and Mrs. Stirling, still known to us all, as Guendolen. It was a brilliant success. Mr. Browning was in the stage-box; and if it is any satisfaction for a poet to hear a crowded house cry "Author, author!" that

satisfaction has belonged to Mr. Browning. The play ran at Drury Lane till the 3rd of June, 1843, and was subsequently revived by Mr. Phelps, during his "memorable management" of Sadlers' Wells.

6. *Colombe's Birthday.* Miss Helen Faucit put this upon the stage in 1852, when it was reckoned a success.

7. *Luria.*

8. *A Soul's Tragedy.*

To call any of these plays unintelligible is ridiculous; and nobody who has ever read them ever did, and why people who have not read them should abuse them is hard to see. Were society put upon its oath, we should be surprised to find how many people in high places have not read *All's Well that Ends Well*, or *Timon of Athens*; but they don't go about saying these plays are unintelligible. Like wise folk, they pretend to have read them, and say nothing. In Browning's case they are spared the hypocrisy. No one need pretend to have read *A Soul's Tragedy*; and it seems, therefore, inexcusable for anyone to assert that one of the plainest, most pointed, and piquant bits of writing in the language is unintelligible. But surely something more may be truthfully said of these plays than that they are comprehensible. First of all, they are *plays*, and not *works*—like the dropsical dramas of Sir Henry Taylor and Mr. Swinburne. Some of them have stood the ordeal of actual representation; and though it would be absurd to pretend that they met with that overwhelming measure of success our critical age

has reserved for such dramatists as the late Lord Lytton, the author of *Money*, the late Tom Taylor, the author of *The Overland Route*, the late Mr. Robertson, the author of *Caste*, Mr. H. Byron, the author of *Our Boys*, Mr. Wills, the author of *Charles I.*, Mr. Burnand, the author of *The Colonel*, and Mr. Gilbert, the author of so much that is really glorious in our national drama; at all events they proved themselves able to arrest and retain the attention of very ordinary audiences. But who can deny dignity and even grandeur to *Luria*, or withhold the meed of a melodious tear from Mildred Tresham? What action of what play is more happily conceived or better rendered than that of *Pippa Passes*?—where innocence and its reverse, tender love and violent passion, are presented with emphasis, and yet blended into a dramatic unity and a poetic perfection, entitling the author to the very first place amongst those dramatists of the century who have laboured under the enormous disadvantage of being poets to start with.

Passing from the plays, we are next attracted by a number of splendid poems, on whose base the structure of Mr. Browning's fame perhaps rests most surely—his dramatic pieces—poems which give utterance to the thoughts and feelings of persons other than himself, or, as he puts it, when dedicating a number of them to his wife:

> Love, you saw me gather men and women,
> Live or dead, or fashioned by my fancy,
> Enter each and all, and use their service,
> Speak from every mouth—the speech a poem;

or, again, in *Sordello*:

> By making speak, myself kept out of view
> The very man, as he was wont to do.

At a rough calculation, there must be at least sixty of these pieces. Let me run over the names of a very few of them. *Saul*, a poem beloved by all true women; *Caliban*, which the men, not unnaturally perhaps, often prefer. The *Two Bishops*; the sixteenth-century one ordering his tomb of jasper and basalt in St. Praxed's Church, and his nineteenth-century successor rolling out his post-prandial "Apologia." *My Last Duchess*, the *Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister*, *Andrea del Sarto*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *Cleon*, *A Death in the Desert*, *The Italian in England*, and *The Englishman in Italy*.

It is plain truth to say that no other English poet, living or dead, Shakespeare excepted, has so heaped up human interest for his readers as has Robert Browning.

Fancy stepping into a room and finding it full of Shakespeare's principal characters! What a babel of tongues! What a jostling of wits! How eagerly one's eye would go in search of Hamlet and Sir John Falstaff, but droop shudderingly at the thought of encountering the distraught gaze of Lady Macbeth! We should have no difficulty in recognising Beatrice in the central figure of that lively group of laughing courtiers; whilst did we seek Juliet, it would, of course, be by appointment on the balcony. To fancy yourself in such company is pleasant matter for a midsummer's night's dream. No poet has such a gallery as Shakespeare, but of our modern poets Browning comes nearest him.

Against these dramatic pieces the charge of unintelligibility fails as completely as it does

against the plays. They are all perfectly intelligible; but—and here is the rub—they are not easy reading, like the estimable writings of the late Mrs. Hemans. They require the same honest attention as it is the fashion to give to a lecture of Professor Huxley's or a sermon of Canon Liddon's: and this is just what too many persons will not give to poetry. They

> Love to hear
> A soft pulsation in their easy ear;
> To turn the page, and let their senses drink
> A lay that shall not trouble them to think.

It is no great wonder it should be so. After dinner, when disposed to sleep, but afraid of spoiling our night's rest, behold the witching hour reserved by the nineteenth century for the study of poetry! This treatment of the muse deserves to be held up to everlasting scorn and infamy in a passage of Miltonic strength and splendour. We, alas! must be content with the observation, that such an opinion of the true place of poetry in the life of a man excites, in the breasts of the right-minded, feelings akin to those which Charles Lamb ascribes to the immortal Sarah Battle, when a young gentleman of a literary turn, on taking a hand in her favourite game of whist, declared that he saw no harm in unbending the mind, now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind. She could not bear, so Elia proceeds, "to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty—the thing she came into the world to do—and she did it: she unbent her mind, afterwards, over a book!" And so the lover

of poetry and Browning, after winding-up his faculties over *Comus* or *Paracelsus*, over *Julius Cæsar* or *Strafford*, may afterwards, if he is so minded, unbend himself over *The Origin of Species*, or that still more fascinating record which tells us how little curly worms, only give them time enough, will cover with earth even the larger kind of stones.

Next to these dramatic pieces come what we may be content to call simply poems: some lyrical, some narrative. The latter are straightforward enough, and, as a rule, full of spirit and humour; but this is more than can always be said of the lyrical pieces. Now, for the first time, in dealing with this first period, excluding *Sordello*, we strike difficulty. The Chinese puzzle comes in. We wonder whether it all turns on the punctuation. And the awkward thing for Mr. Browning's reputation is this, that these bewildering poems are, for the most part, very short. We say awkward, for it is not more certain that Sarah Gamp liked her beer drawn mild, than it is that your Englishman likes his poetry cut short; and so, accordingly, it often happens that some estimable paterfamilias takes up an odd volume of Browning his volatile son or moonstruck daughter has left lying about, pishes and pshaws! and then, with an air of much condescension and amazing candour, remarks that he will give the fellow another chance, and not condemn him unread. So saying, he opens the book, and carefully selects the very shortest poem he can find; and in a moment, without sign or signal, note or warning, the unhappy man is floundering up to his neck

in lines like these, which are the third and final stanza of a poem called *Another Way of Love*:

> And after, for pastime,
> If June be refulgent
> With flowers in completeness,
> All petals, no prickles,
> Delicious as trickles
> Of wine poured at mass-time,
> And choose One indulgent
> To redness and sweetness;
> Or if with experience of man and of spider,
> She use my June lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
> To stop the fresh spinning,—why, June will consider.

He comes up gasping, and more than ever persuaded that Browning's poetry is a mass of inconglomerate nonsense, which nobody understands—least of all members of the Browning Society.

We need be at no pains to find a meaning for everything Mr. Browning has written. But when all is said and done—when these few freaks of a crowded brain are thrown overboard to the sharks of verbal criticism who feed on such things—Mr. Browning and his great poetical achievement remain behind to be dealt with and accounted for. We do not get rid of the Laureate by quoting:

> O darling room, my heart's delight
> Dear room, the apple of my sight,
> With thy two couches soft and white
> There is no room so exquisite—
> No little room so warm and bright
> Wherein to read, wherein to write;

or of Wordsworth by quoting:

> At this, my boy hung down his head:
> He blushed with shame, nor made reply,
> And five times to the child I said,
> "Why, Edward? tell me why?"—

or of Keats by remembering that he once addressed a young lady as follows:

> O come, Georgiana! the rose is full blown,
> The riches of Flora are lavishly strown:
> The air is all softness and crystal the streams,
> The west is resplendently clothèd in beams.

The strength of a rope may be but the strength of its weakest part; but poets are to be judged in their happiest hours, and in their greatest works.

Taking, then, this first period of Mr. Browning's poetry as a whole, and asking ourselves if we are the richer for it, how can there be any doubt as to the reply? What points of human interest has he left untouched? With what phase of life, character, or study does he fail to sympathise? So far from being the rough-hewn block "dull fools" have supposed him, he is the most dilettante of great poets. Do you dabble in art and perambulate picture-galleries? Browning must be your favourite poet: he is art's historian. Are you devoted to music? So is he: and alone of our poets has sought to fathom in verse the deep mysteries of sound. Do you find it impossible to keep off theology? Browning has more theology than most bishops—could puzzle Gamaliel and delight Aquinas. Are you in love? Read *A Last Ride Together*, *Youth and Art*, *A Portrait*, *Christine*, *In a Gondola*, *By the Fireside*, *Love amongst the Ruins*, *Time's Revenges*, *The Worst of It*, and a host of others, being careful always to end with *A Madhouse Cell*; and we are much mistaken if you do not put Browning at the very head and front of the interpreters of passion. The many moods of sorrow are reflected in his verse,

whilst mirth, movement, and a rollicking humour abound everywhere.

I will venture upon but three quotations, for it is late in the day to be quoting Browning. The first shall be a well-known bit of blank verse about art from *Fra Lippo Lippi*:

> For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love
> First when we see them painted, things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times, nor cared to see:
> And so they are better painted—better to us,
> Which is the same thing. Art was given for that—
> God uses us to help each other so,
> Lending our minds out. Have you noticed now
> Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
> And, trust me, but you should though. How much more
> If I drew higher things with the same truth!
> That were to take the prior's pulpit-place—
> Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh!
> It makes me mad to see what men shall do,
> And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
> Nor blank: it means intensely, and means good.
> To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

The second is some rhymed rhetoric from *Holy-Cross Day*—the testimony of the dying Jew in Rome:

> This world has been harsh and strange,
> Something is wrong: there needeth a change.
> But what or where? at the last or first?
> In one point only we sinned, at worst.
>
> The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
> And again in his border see Israel set.
> When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
> The stranger-seed shall be joined to them:
> To Jacob's house shall the Gentiles cleave:
> So the prophet saith, and his sons believe.
>
> Ay, the children of the chosen race
> Shall carry and bring them to their place;
> In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
> Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame
> When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
> The oppressor triumph for evermore?

God spoke, and gave us the word to keep:
Bade never fold the hands, nor sleep
'Mid a faithless world, at watch and ward,
Till the Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By His servant Moses the watch was set:
Though near upon cockcrow, we keep it yet.

Thou! if Thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
By the starlight naming a dubious Name;
And if we were too heavy with sleep, too rash
With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash
Fell on Thee, coming to take Thine own,
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the throne;

Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
But, the Judgment over, join sides with us!
Thine, too, is the cause! and not more Thine
Than ours is the work of these dogs and swine,
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed.

We withstood Christ then? Be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now!
Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared,
To have called these—Christians—had we dared!
Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee,
And Rome make amends for Calvary!

By the torture, prolonged from age to age;
By the infamy, Israel's heritage;
By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
And the summons to Christian fellowship,

We boast our proof, that at least the Jew
Would wrest Christ's name from the devil's crew.

The last quotation shall be from the veritable Browning—of one of those poetical audacities none ever dared but the Danton of modern poetry. Audacious in its familiar realism, in its total disregard of poetical environment, in its rugged abruptness: but supremely successful, and alive with emotion:

What is he buzzing in my ears?
Now that I come to die,
Do I view the world as a vale of tears?
Ah, reverend sir, not I.

What I viewed there once, what I view again,
Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge, is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
From a house you could descry
O'er the garden-wall. Is the curtain blue
Or green to a healthy eye?

To mine, it serves for the old June weather,
Blue above lane and wall;
And that farthest bottle, labelled "Ether,"
Is the house o'ertopping all.

At a terrace somewhat near its stopper,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl—I know, sir, it's improper:
My poor mind's out of tune.

Only there was a way—you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house—two eyes except.
They styled their house "The Lodge."

What right had a lounger up their lane?
But by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to oes,

Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic—there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled "Ether"—
And stole from stair to stair,

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas!
We loved, sir; used to meet.
How sad and bad and mad it was!
But then, how it was sweet!

The second period of Mr. Browning's poetry demands a different line of argument; for it is,

in my judgment, folly to deny that he has of late years written a great deal which makes very difficult reading indeed. No doubt you may meet people who tell you that they read *The Ring and the Book* for the first time without much mental effort; but you will do well not to believe them. These poems are difficult—they cannot help being so. What is *The Ring and the Book*? A huge novel in 20,000 lines—told after the method not of Scott but of Balzac; it tears the hearts out of a dozen characters; it tells the same story from ten different points of view. It is loaded with detail of every kind and description: you are let off nothing. As with a schoolboy's life at a large school, if he is to enjoy it at all, he must fling himself into it, and care intensely about everything—so the reader of *The Ring and the Book* must be interested in everybody and everything, down to the fact that the eldest daughter of the counsel for the prosecution of Guido is eight years old on the very day he is writing his speech, and that he is going to have fried liver and parsley for his supper.

If you are prepared for this, you will have your reward; for the *style*, though rugged and involved, is throughout, with the exception of the speeches of counsel, eloquent, and at times superb; and as for the *matter*, if your interest in human nature is keen, curious, almost professional—if nothing man, woman, or child has been, done, or suffered, or conceivably can be, do, or suffer, is without interest for you; if you are fond of analysis, and do not shrink from dissection—you will prize *The Ring and the Book* as the surgeon prizes the last great contribution to comparative anatomy or pathology.

But this sort of work tells upon style. Browning has, I think, fared better than some writers. To me, at all events, the step from *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* to *The Ring and the Book* is not so marked as is the *mauvais pas* that lies between *Amos Barton* and *Daniel Deronda*. But difficulty is not obscurity. One task is more difficult than another. The angles at the base of the isosceles triangles are apt to get mixed, and to confuse us all—man and woman alike. *Prince Hohenstiel* something-or-another is a very difficult poem, not only to pronounce but to read; but if a poet chooses as his subject Napoleon III.—in whom the cad, the coward, the idealist, and the sensualist were inextricably mixed—and purports to make him unbosom himself over a bottle of Gladstone claret in a tavern in Leicester Square, you cannot expect that the product should belong to the same class of poetry as Mr. Coventry Patmore's admirable *Angel in the House*.

It is the method that is difficult. Take the husband in *The Ring and the Book*. Mr. Browning remorselessly hunts him down, tracks him to the last recesses of his mind, and there bids him stand and deliver. He describes love, not only broken but breaking; hate in its germ; doubt at its birth. These are difficult things to do either in poetry or prose, and people with easy, flowing Addisonian or Tennysonian styles cannot do them.

I seem to overhear a still, small voice asking, But are they worth doing? or at all events is it the province of art to do them? The question ought not to be asked. It is heretical, being contrary to the whole direction of the latter half of

this century. The chains binding us to the rocks of realism are faster riveted every day; and the Perseus who is destined to cut them is, I expect, some mischievous little boy at a Board-school. But as the question has been asked, I will own that sometimes, even when deepest in works of this, the now orthodox school, I have been harassed by distressing doubts whether, after all, this enormous labour is not in vain; and, wearied by the effort, overloaded by the detail, bewildered by the argument, and sickened by the pitiless dissection of character and motive, have been tempted to cry aloud, quoting—or rather, in the agony of the moment, misquoting—Coleridge:

> Simplicity—
> Thou better name than all the family of Fame.

But this ebullition of feeling is childish and even sinful. We must take our poets as we do our meals —as they are served up to us. Indeed, you may, if full of courage, give a cook notice, but not the time-spirit who makes our poets. We may be sure—to appropriate an idea of the late Sir James Stephen—that if Robert Browning had lived in the sixteenth century, he would not have written a poem like *The Ring and the Book*; and if Edmund Spenser had lived in the nineteenth century he would not have written a poem like *The Faerie Queen*.

It is therefore idle to arraign Mr. Browning's later method and style for possessing difficulties and intricacies which are inherent to it. The method, at all events, has an interest of its own, a strength of its own, a grandeur of its own. If you do not like it, you must leave it alone. You are fond, you say, of romantic poetry; well, then,

take down your Spenser and qualify yourself to join "the small transfigured band" of those who are able to take their Bible-oaths they have read their *Faerie Queen* all through. The company, though small, is delightful, and you will have plenty to talk about without abusing Browning, who probably knows his Spenser better than you do. Realism will not for ever dominate the world of letters and art—the fashion of all things passeth away—but it has already earned a great place: it has written books, composed poems, painted pictures, all stamped with that "greatness" which, despite fluctuations, nay, even reversals of taste and opinion, means immortality.

But against Mr. Browning's later poems it is sometimes alleged that their meaning is obscure because their grammar is bad. A cynic was once heard to observe with reference to that noble poem *The Grammarian's Funeral*, that it was a pity the talented author had ever since allowed himself to remain under the delusion that he had not only buried the grammarian, but his grammar also. It is doubtless true that Mr. Browning has some provoking ways, and is something too much of a verbal acrobat. Also, as his witty parodist, the pet poet of six generations of Cambridge undergraduates, reminds us:

> He loves to dock the smaller parts of speech,
> As we curtail the already curtailed cur.

It is perhaps permissible to weary a little of his *i*'s and *o*'s, but we believe we cannot be corrected when we say that Browning is a poet whose grammar will bear scholastic investigation better than that of most of Apollo's children.

A word about *Sordello*. One half of *Sordello*, and that, with Mr. Browning's usual ill-luck, the first half, is undoubtedly obscure. It is as difficult to read as *Endymion* or the *Revolt of Islam*, and for the same reason—the author's lack of experience in the art of composition. We have all heard of the young architect who forgot to put a staircase in his house, which contained fine rooms, but no way of getting into them. *Sordello* is a poem without a staircase. The author, still in his twenties, essayed a high thing. For his subject:

> He singled out
> Sordello compassed murkily about
> With ravage of six long sad hundred years.

He partially failed; and the British public, with its accustomed generosity, and in order, I suppose, to encourage the others, has never ceased girding at him, because forty-two years ago he published, at his own charges, a little book of two hundred and fifty pages, which even such of them as were then able to read could not understand.

Poetry should be vital—either stirring our blood by its divine movement, or snatching our breath by its divine perfection. To do both is supreme glory; to do either is enduring fame.

There is a great deal of beautiful poetical writing to be had nowadays from the booksellers. It is interesting reading, but as one reads one trembles. It smells of mortality. It would seem as if, at the very birth of most of our modern poems,

> The conscious Parcæ threw
> Upon their roseate lips a Stygian hue.

That their lives may be prolonged is my pious prayer. In these bad days, when it is thought

more educationally useful to know the principle of the common pump than Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, one cannot afford to let any good poetry die.

But when we take down Browning, we cannot think of him and the "wormy bee" together. He is so unmistakably and deliciously alive. Die, indeed! when one recalls the ideal characters he has invested with reality; how he has described love and joy, pain and sorrow, art and music; as poems like *Childe Roland*, *Abt Vogler*, *Evelyn Hope*, *The Worst of It*, *Pictor Ignotus*, *The Lost Leader*, *Home Thoughts from Abroad*, *Old Pictures in Florence*, *Hervé Riel*, *A Householder*, *Fears and Scruples*, come tumbling into one's memory, one over another—we are tempted to employ the language of hyperbole, and to answer the question "Will Browning die?" by exclaiming, "Yes; when Niagara stops." In him indeed we can

> Discern
> Infinite passion and the pain
> Of finite hearts that yearn.

But love of Mr. Browning's poetry is no exclusive cult.

Of Lord Tennyson it is needless to speak. Certainly amongst his Peers there is no such Poet.

Mr. Arnold may have a limited poetical range and a restricted style, but within that range and in that style, surely we must exclaim:

> Whence that completed form of all completeness?
> Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness?

Rossetti's luscious lines seldom fail to cast a spell by which

> In sundry moods 'tis pastime to be bound.

William Morris has a sunny slope of Parnassus

all to himself, and Mr. Swinburne has written some verses over which the world will long love to linger.

Dull must he be of soul who can take up Cardinal Newman's *Verses on Various Occasions*, or Miss Christina Rossetti's poems, and lay them down without recognising their diverse charm.

Let us be Catholics in this great matter, and burn our candles at many shrines. In the pleasant realms of poesy, no liveries are worn, no paths prescribed; you may wander where you will, stop where you like, and worship whom you love. Nothing is demanded of you, save this, that in all your wanderings and worships, you keep two objects steadily in view—two, and two only, truth and beauty.

NOTE.—I cannot deny myself the pleasure of printing a letter I received from Mr. Browning immediately after the publication of this essay in 1884.

19 WARWICK CRESCENT, W.
July 30, '84.

MY DEAR SIR,

I received your note last evening and the little book this day. I have just read the two first essays and no more, and if I make haste to say a word about them at once, it is because of an experience I obtained a few weeks ago, when, supposing as I did that the remarkable qualities of a poem which had surprised me were as yet undiscovered by anybody, I ventured to give my opinion with something of the pride of a discoverer, only to find, to my great satisfaction in all other respects, that I had been forestalled by a critical publication the week before. Let me tell you in the hot haste of the minute how much I have been gratified by your good-natured estimate of my poetry, and by the proofs throughout the Essay that you at least take the trouble to try and understand a matter before you pronounce upon it. So much for me: the notice of Carlyle, whom I knew well, is adequate and admirable. I shall now resume my reading—broken off to say thus much or thus little, but it is something to clearly recognise a friend at first sight and be entitled to call oneself henceforth

His cordially,

ROBERT BROWNING.

ROBERT BROWNING

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE BROWNING HALL SETTLEMENT, WALWORTH, DECEMBER 12TH, 1897

TO meet together to do honour to the memory and extol the genius of a great poet is so becoming, so proper, and so seemly a thing to do, that it needs neither apology nor explanation. We have all come here, I hope, attracted by one and the same force—Robert Browning. He—that is to say, his genius—has entered mystically into the lives of many thousands of his countrymen. He lives on in our minds a joint-life with the manifold emotions, the countless joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, doubts and certainties that course one another, like shadows over the hillside, over the very uneven surfaces of our lives. For unless a poet really succeeds in weaving himself into the texture of our days, in mingling himself with the crowded phantasmagoria of life; unless he stands by our side as we feast our eyes on scenes of splendour or of charm; unless we think of him either when alone we tread the wine-press of sorrow, or when we are merry:

> Flower o' the rose,
> If I've been merry what matter who knows?—

unless a poet, I say, is this, and does this for us, he at all events is not one of *our* great poets. But if he

is this, and if he does this, we all owe him reverence, and should not be too shamefaced openly to avow it.

Criticism, of course, has its hour. Everything is exposed to criticism—except, possibly, the solar system. The human frame itself, though made, as we are told, in the image of God, is open to just animadversion; at least, so I was recently assured by an eminent physiologist to whom I was complaining of that worst of all the "isms"—rheumatism. Said he, "You need not wonder. The human frame is open to just animadversion." We do well, therefore, to be critical. It does not do to be too easily pleased; to take anything and everything to the sanctuary of our hearts. There is no word in the English language the depreciation of which is more deplorable than the word taste. It has become but a paltry thing—taste in blue china or in Japanese fans—but in reality it is a great gift. To have a bad taste is a shocking calamity. The critical faculty must not be suppressed. But criticism is but a means to an end, and the end is joy. In literature, as in life, the whole is far greater than its parts. To mention only the poets of this century, and British poets, Scott and Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson, Arnold, Browning, are more to the living, and have been more to the unnumbered dead, than ever you would guess by reading about them in the reviews or in those nice little summaries and estimates of their work and wages with which the road to Parnassus is so neatly paved in these latter days.

To-night we are not critical, we are frankly grateful, and avowedly reverent. The longer I live

the more convinced I become that the only two things that really count in national existence are a succession of writers of genius and the proud memories of great, noble, and honourable deeds. And the writer of genius is only he whose words "pass into proverbs among his people"; whose thoughts colour men's lives; who comes and goes with them in and out of their homesteads; who accompanies them whithersoever they may wander, whatever they may do, by whatever death they may be destined to die. For the fame of such a writer, you must look far beyond the cliques and coteries of a self-conscious culture; you must look out upon the open road and the flagged walks of cities where men and women are living their lives and playing their parts—"the same old rôle, the rôle that is what we make it; as great as we like, or as small as we like, or both great and small" (Walt Whitman).

Robert Browning is far too near us to enable even the most far-seeing to lay out his kingdom by metes and bounds. Besides, who ever dare tether the spirit of poesy? It bloweth where it lists. In old days one was sometimes asked, "But who reads Browning?" It was always easy to reply, "More people than are dreamed of in your philosophy." But that particular foolish question, at all events, is no longer asked. The obscure author of the undoubtedly obscure *Sordello*, who came from nobody knew where, and wrote a poem about nobody knew what; who was vouched for by none of the great schools and universities, of which Englishmen are wont to make much; who courted no critic and sought no man's society;

slowly, very slowly, won his audience, made his way, earned his fame without puffs preliminary in the newspapers, or any other of the now well-worn expedients of attracting attention to that lamentable object one's self.

There is something indescribably affecting and majestic in the progress of three of the greatest writers of our time—Carlyle, Tennyson, and Browning—all three men of undoubted genius. Thank God, no one of them bowed the knee to Baal. Faults they probably all had, faults of style, and it may be of temper; poverty they knew, and depression of spirit; for long it actually seemed as if there were no room for these three men in the very country they best adorned. We are too apt to forget in reading the lives or considering the lives of these men—we are somewhat too apt to jump these long periods; our forward-reaching thoughts rush and crowd to the time when their genius shall be recognised and their labour rewarded. We act upon the advice, usually sound, *Respice finem.* But those periods had to be lived through, week by week, month by month, long year after long year. With what a depth of half-concealed feeling does Carlyle, in his essay on Johnson, tell the story how "when Dr. Johnson one day read his own Satire, in which the life of a scholar is painted, with the various obstructions thrown in his way to fortune and to fame, he burst into a passion of tears. Mr. Thrale's family and Mr. Scott only were present, who, in a jocose way, clapped him on the back, and said: 'What's all this, my dear sir? Why, you and I and *Hercules*, you know, were all troubled with *melancholy*.' He

was a very large man, and made out the triumvirate with Johnson and Hercules, comically enough. These," adds Carlyle, " were sweet tears; the sweet victorious remembrance lay in them of toils indeed frightful, yet never flinched from, and now triumphed over. 'One day it shall delight you also to remember labour done.' "

No one of the three—Carlyle, Tennyson, or Browning—abated a jot or a tittle of their just pretensions. They flung no sops to Cerberus; they never asked the great greedy public what it wanted; no, each of them

> Smote the rock and spread the water,
> Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him;

and after a while the crowd—which, after all, is a docile crowd—ceased to sneer, and a generation arose who learned both to love and to reverence; and these illustrious men, who had the luck to live, saw the world, which had mocked them in their hour of real need, grow almost grotesquely eager to pay its debt with compound interest.

It is a mark of high rank in poetry to attain eminence both in thought and in expression by undefinable paths. You cannot say confidently of Wordsworth, or of Tennyson, or of Browning, how they came to possess their ideas. Most men can be tracked as easily as you track a fox. At this age they read this or that book; they then proceeded to this college at the university, or to that; after leaving the university they went somewhere and met somebody; as they grew older they modified their opinions in one direction or another, or allied themselves to one party or to another. It is almost as easy as playing Tick-tack-to. Even if

they go to the universities original men have a trick of leaving them without taking their degree. Who taught Robert Browning his marvellous lore? You cannot say. No great poet, perhaps, ever expressed orthodox opinion. The clergy poets, as they have been called, are more estimable than great. I suppose this is what Emerson meant when he said, "Would a man be great, he must be a Nonconformist." But by a Nonconformist, Emerson, I take it, did not exactly mean a Baptist. The poets will not vote by ticket. Their song of faith may be clear, but if so, it is with the clearness of the lark; their piety may be assured, but if so it is the piety of the heavens. You must not approach them with tests, or vex them with *credos* cast in the language of ancient theological controversy. We are told in the biography of Sir Matthew Hale, that eminent judge, that he never once for thirty-six years missed going to church on Sunday. You will search the biographies of great poets in vain for a similar testimony. They are notorious absentees, and Wordsworth one of the worst. It is a strange thought how, side by side with the stately establishments of religion, with old creeds and splendid liturgies, Church music and processions, systems of theology well defined and well protected—side by side with these you find, unestablished, unendowed, and in a sense unrecognised, but wielding an influence as wide as the heavens—you find the poets. Mankind has ever turned to them to hear what *they* had to say of the mysteries of being, of life, and death and immortality. It is often little enough; it is vague, it is indefinable; by the side of the assurances

of the Church it is almost contemptible; yet it possesses an authority of its own, an authority recognised always, everywhere, and by all.

The connection between poetry and religion is a very ancient one. The great poet, after whom this hall, this old chapel, has been renamed was

> One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
> Never doubted clouds would break,
> Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
> Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
> Sleep to wake.

He did not come to this faith through Wordsworthian channels, by nature worship, or through the dark and mystical passages of the sacraments; but from the very first he seems to have had an overwhelming sense (to use the words of Mr. Nettleship) of the actual existence of a personal God, and the firm-rooted belief "that a man's business on this earth is to learn the actual extent of his own soul's power, and, having learned that, to develop it; not relatively to the moral or social laws prevalent in this life, but absolutely for the soul's aggrandisement in a life hereafter." Matthew Arnold in one of his poems speaks, somewhat too contemptuously perhaps, of "doctors of the soul." Browning was a wise and true doctor of the soul, full as he is of vigour and passion and force, mindful of all the things that make up life, and have made it up here on this earth:

> Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
> Long ago;
> Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
> Struck them tame,
> And that glory and that shame alike the gold
> Bought and sold.

Browning knew all this better than most men, but

> Whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin,

could not avail against his strenuous faith in the soul of man.

> Oh! we are sunk enough here, God knows;
> But not quite so sunk that moments,
> Pure tho' seldom, are denied us
> When the Spirit's true endowments
> Stand out plainly from its false ones,
> And apprise it if pursuing
> Or the right way or the wrong way,
> To its triumph or undoing.
> There are flashes struck from midnights,
> There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
> Whereby piled-up honours perish,
> Whereby swoll'n ambitions dwindle;
> While first this or that poor impulse,
> Which for once had play unstifled,
> Seems the sole work of a life-time
> That away the rest have trifled.

In these lines, and many others which will occur, I dare say, to your memories, but with which it would not be wise to detain you, you will recognise the true Browning that we love. He has no room for pessimism in his philosophy. To call him a cheerful poet would be to insult his vast knowledge and deep-seated wisdom. He had delved too deep into human nature, into the hearts of Guidos and Gauthiers; he was, indeed, too well read in the history of hell ever to be a cheerful poet. But he is a cheering one. He helps you up. He does not lie down affectionately by your side.

> What is the doubt, my brothers? Quick with it!
> Quick, for time presses. Tell the whole mind out,
> And let us ask and answer and be saved.
>
> Then, welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,

Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence—a paradox,
Which comforts while it mocks—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me;
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

Is it any wonder we love Browning? With him life is full of great things—of love and beauty and joy. His poems, particularly of that period which ends in *The Ring and the Book*, are all aglow with the colour of life, its many-hued interests. Hence, while we are reading him, we find it easy to share his strenuous hope, his firm faith, particularly his undying faith in immortality. It is the poverty of our lives that renders it hard to believe in immortality. I am quoting from an American writer, W. R. Alger. "If," he says, "a man feels that his life is spent in expedients for killing time, he finds it hard to suppose that he can go on for ever trying to kill eternity. It is when he thinks on the littlenesses that make up his day, on the poor trifles he cares for—his pipe, his dinner, his ease, his gains, his newspaper—that he feels so cramped and cribbed, cabined, and confined that he loses the power of conceiving anything vast or sublime —immortality among the rest. When a man rises in his aims and looks to the weal of the universe, and the harmony of the soul with God, then we feel that extinction would be grievous; that it would be waste of a plant brought by God towards perfection, towards comprehending God's work, and longing to help in it, and thereby becoming

able to help in it, if at this moment it was to perish." Who so helpful to make us rise in our aims as Robert Browning? "Tell the whole mind out!" How characteristic a phrase of the poet's is that, and how he has done it over and over again, sometimes in his own name, oftener in dramatic guise and not necessarily speaking out his own mind. Have we not got it in *Caliban upon Setebos*, in *Bishop Blougram*, in *Mr. Sludge, the Medium*? Nowhere else in modern speech could we find utterances so large, so convincing, so full of the marrow and fatness of speculation.

You are happy in this hall to be associated with so victorious a name. Here, in this old York Street Dissenting chapel, on the 14th of June, 1812, he was brought to be baptised, and no more valiant soldier was enlisted in the army of things spiritual, at any of the altars of Christianity, on that 14th of June, than Robert Browning. He had been what we call dead for eight years. The loss is great for those who knew him. In my memory he will always live as the most cordial man I ever knew. Never can I forget how on your entrance he would rise from his chair, advance to meet you with both arms outstretched, and cover you with the rich bounty of his welcome. The worst thing I ever heard said of Browning was that, like his own *Last Duchess*, he

> . . . liked whate'er
> He looked on, and his looks went everywhere.
> Sir, 'twas all one!

As one of his latest and least distinguished acquaintances, I, at all events, did not quarrel with a courtesy which from the first I recognised to be

the natural clothing of a noble and affectionate nature. But the poet Browning is not dead, he still energises among us, and unless, indeed, his faith woefully deceived him, he lives elsewhere, and his spirit may well be with us to-night. Surely, at all events, we would wish it to be so.

> That still despite the distance and the dark
> What was, again may be, some interchange
> Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,
> Some benediction anciently thy smile.

He, however, has himself taught us how to speak of him after his death:

> At the midnight, in the silence of the sleep-time,
> When you set your fancies free,
> Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
> Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
> —Pity me?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> No, at noonday, in the bustle of man's work-time,
> Greet the unseen with a cheer!
> Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
> "Strive and thrive!" cry, "Speed, fight on, fare ever
> There as here!"

Note, 1922.—Just now Browning's burly optimism stands in the way of his popularity and throws doubt on his cheerful philosophy. God may be in His heaven, but certainly it is not all right with the world.

TENNYSON

The *Speaker*, October 8th, 1892

BY the death of Lord Tennyson at a green old age English literature has been robbed of its brightest luminary. Thousands of hearts are clad in mourning, for it was the glory of Tennyson to be at once consummate and popular, to stir the heart of the simple and to arouse the enthusiasm of the scholar. Like Spenser, he was a poet's poet; like Longfellow, he was a people's. Generations of men and women have passed their lives from childhood to maturity under his charm. As boys and girls they raved about *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*, and *The May Queen*; as they exchanged childhood for youth they found what their new state demanded in the passion of *Maud*, and the silvery melancholy of *In Memoriam*; as grown men and women they rejoiced over the magnificent vigour of the later Ballads and Poems, whilst their delight in the poet's mastery of his craft grew keener day by day.

This is not the time to attempt any detailed criticism. We stand to-day by an open grave soon to hide from us those noble features which have stamped themselves indelibly upon all loving memories. How enormous, how incalculable is the debt of gratitude we owe to Tennyson! What a barrier he built with his own hands against

the incursions of vulgarity—of low and depraved tastes in life and art! What a lesson to poets! What a school for humanity! His poems are everywhere, in every kind of edition. Wherever the English language, which he did so much to keep pure and undefiled, has travelled, Tennyson has followed in its wake—giving pleasure, exalting courage, purifying taste.

Tennyson's life scarcely needs telling. He was born on the 6th of August, 1809, one of the many sons of a country parson. He was early made acquainted in his Lincolnshire home with those blowing winds, ridged wolds, and the panorama of the sky, which his verse has glorified and carried into the hearts of thousands who else might have remained stupidly impassive to their charm.

From the first Tennyson bore the stamp of greatness, that undefinable something, which is the true, as it is the only nobility. At Trinity College, Cambridge, and in his early London life the men who knew him never had any doubt about him. He was not as other men. Nobody besought him to read for the Bar or to take orders or "to do" anything. There he was and there he would remain till his hour came. His early poems contained much to make the groundlings laugh, but little to make the judicious grieve. "Young Mr. Tennyson" had that in him which made all men pause. When ridiculed, the author of *Lilian*, and *Isabel*, and *Mariana*, and *Madeline* could hit back harder than any of the black-fisted crew who jostled one another in the Grub Street of the day. Happily he had seldom any occasion to teach anyone manners. He first found his audience, as all true

poets do, amongst the younger race. The elders sat for a while in the seat of the scornful, and declared the new poet unintelligible, but their criticisms died upon their lips. Tennyson's poetry, like the sunrise in *Pippa Passes*, was not to be suppressed; it soon

> Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
> Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

For many a long year he was declared unapproachable, and, like the skylark, enjoyed "a glorious privacy of light." Those comparisons which were once so popular between Tennyson and Browning have ceased to be of much interest. Tennyson was not such a thinker, nor did he touch upon so many themes of human interest, as his great contemporary; but in the field of pure poetry, when regarded as masters of poetic diction, the first place must always be given, without question or demur, to the author of *The Lotos-Eaters*, *Ulysses*, *Lucretius*, and other pieces. But, as we have already said, this is no time for criticism. It is our hour of sorrow for an exceeding heavy loss.

Lord Tennyson was a man of great reading, delightful humour, and wide observation. His knowledge of poetry was as accurate as his ear was nice. He had a genuine affection for our old writers, and the heartiest appreciation of their various humours. His acquaintance with literature was that intimate acquaintance born of love and long companionship, which so gloriously distinguishes the real man of letters from even the most brilliant of *littérateurs*.

Tennyson had a true Briton's heart, and delighted

in travels, adventures, and deeds of *derring-do*. If in later life his politics took a gloomy hue, it was because he thought he noticed signs of decline in our national valour and prowess, and for no other reason. He sought no refuge for his melancholy behind churches, and wrote no *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*.

His character was marked and even dominated by that simplicity which is the essential note of real greatness. At the same time, he was a man of sound judgment, always well able to take care of himself if need was. Above everything else he loved to live his own life. His fiercest notes were sounded when gossip and scandal blackened the air. The "new journalism," as it is called—though there is nothing particularly new about it, except the extent of its circulation—was not at all to his mind.

> For now the Poet cannot die,
> Nor leave his music as of old,
> But round him ere he scarce be cold
> Begins the scandal and the cry:
>
> "Proclaim the faults he would not show,
> Break lock and seal—betray the trust:
> Keep nothing sacred: 'tis but just
> The many-headed Beast should know."

The dead Tennyson need fear nothing from scandal. His life was as immaculate as his verse.

Perhaps the best tribute we can pay to his genius is to abolish the office he held since the death of Wordsworth. Let us have no more Laureates, The line began gloriously with Ben Jonson, let it end splendidly with Alfred Tennyson.

CARDINAL NEWMAN

1892

I

THERE are some men whose names are inseparably and exclusively associated with movements; there are others who are for ever united in human memories with places; it is the happy fortune of the distinguished man whose name is at the top of this page to be able to make good both titles to an estate in our minds and hearts; for whilst his fierce intellectual energy made him the leader of a great movement, his rare and exquisite tenderness has married his name to a lovely place. Whenever men's thoughts dwell upon the revival of Church authority in England and America during this century, they will recall the Vicar of St. Mary's, Oxford, who lived to become a Cardinal of Rome, and whenever the lover of all things that are quiet and gentle and true in life and literature visits Oxford, he will find himself wondering whether snap-dragon still grows outside the windows of the rooms in Trinity where once lived the author of the *Apologia*.

The Rev. John Wesley was a distinguished man, if ever there was one, and his name is associated with a movement certainly as remarkable as, and a great deal more useful than, the one connected with the name of Newman. Wesley's great mis-

sionary tours in Devon and Cornwall, and the wild, remote parts of Lancashire, lack no single element of sublimity. To this day the memories of those apostolic journeys are green and precious, and a source of strength and joy: the portrait of the eager preacher hangs up in almost every miner's cottage, whilst his name is pronounced with reverence by a hundred thousand lips. "You seem a very temperate people here," once observed a thirsty pedestrian (who was, indeed, none other than the present writer) to a Cornish miner; "how did it happen?" He replied solemnly, raising his cap, "There came a man amongst us once, and his name was John Wesley." Wesley was an Oxford man, but he is not much in men's thoughts as they visit that city of enchantment. Why is this? It is because, great as Wesley was, he lacked charm. Ae we read his diaries and letters, we are interested, we are moved, but we are not pleased. Now, Oxford pleases and charms. Therefore it is, that when we allow ourselves a day in her quadrangles we find ourselves thinking of Dr. Newman and his Trinity snap-dragon, and how the Rev. William James, "some time in the year 1823," taught him the doctrine of Apostolic Succession in the course of a walk round Christchurch Meadow, rather than of Wesley and his prayer-meetings at Lincoln, which were proclaimed by the authorities as savouring of sedition.

A strong personal attachment of the kind which springs up from reading an author, which is distilled through his pages, and turns his foibles, even his follies, into pleasant things we would not for the world have altered, is apt to cause the reader

who is thus affected to exaggerate the importance of any intellectual movement with which the author happened to be associated. There are, I know, people who think this is notably so in Dr. Newman's case. Crusty men are to be met with, who rudely say they have heard enough of the Oxford movement, and that the time is over for penning ecstatic paragraphs about Dr. Newman's personal appearance in the pulpit at St. Mary's. I think these crusty people are wrong. The movement was no doubt an odd one in some of its aspects—it wore a very academic air indeed; and to be academic is to be ridiculous, in the opinion of many. Our great Northern towns lived their grimy lives, amidst the whirl of their machinery, quite indifferent to the movement. Our huge Nonconformist bodies knew no more of the University of Oxford in those days than they did of the University of Tübingen. This movement sent no missionaries to the miners, and its tracts were not of the kind that are served suddenly upon you in the streets like legal processes, but were, in fact, bulky treatises stuffed full of the dead languages. London, of course, heard about the movement, and, so far as she was not tickled by the comicality of the notion of anything really important happening outside her cab-radius, was irritated by it. Mr. Henry Rogers poked heavy fun at it in the *Edinburgh Review*. Mr. Isaac Taylor wrote two volumes to prove that ancient Christianity was a drivelling and childish superstition, and in the opinion of some pious Churchmen succeeded in doing so. But for the most part people left the movement alone, unless they happened to be bishops or very

clerically connected. "The bishops," says Dr. Newman, "began charging against us." But bishops' charges are amongst the many seemingly important things that do not count in England. It is said to be the duty of an archdeacon to read his bishop's charge, but it is undoubted law that a mandamus will not be granted to compel him to do so.

But notwithstanding this aspect of the case, it was a genuine thought-movement in propagating which these long-coated parsons, with their dry jokes, strange smiles, and queer notions were engaged. They used to drive about the country in gigs, from one parsonage to another, and leave their tracts behind them. They were not concerned with the flocks—their message was to the shepherds. As for the Dissenters, they had nothing to say to them, except that their very presence in a parish was a plenary argument for the necessity of the movement.

The Tractarians met with the usual fortune of those who peddle new ideas. Some rectors did not want to be primitive—more did not know what it meant; but enough were found pathetically anxious to read a meaning into their services and offices, to make it plain that the *Tracts* really were "for" and not "against" the times.

The great plot, plan, or purpose, call it what you will, of the Tractarian movement was to make Churchmen believe with a personal conviction that the Church of England was not a mere National Institution, like the House of Commons or the game of cricket, but a living branch of that Catholic Church which God had, from the

beginning, endowed with sacramental gifts and graces, with a Priesthood apostolically descended, with a Creed, precise and specific, which it was the Church's duty to teach and man's to believe, and with a ritual and discipline to be practised and maintained with daily piety and entire submission.

These were new ideas in 1833. When Dr. Newman was ordained in 1824, he has told us, he did not look on ordination as a sacramental rite, nor did he ascribe to baptism any supernatural virtue.

It cannot be denied that the Tractarians had their work before them. But they had forces on their side.

It is always pleasant to rediscover the meaning of words and forms which have been dulled by long usage. This is why etymology is so fascinating. By the natural bent of our minds we are lovers of whatever things are true and real. We hanker after facts. To get a grip of reality is a pleasure so keen —most of our faith is so desperate a "make-believe," that it is not to be wondered at that pious folk should have been found who rejoiced to be told that what they had been saying and doing all the years of their lives really had a meaning and a history of its own. One would have to be very unsympathetic not to perceive that the time we are speaking of must have been a very happy one for many a devout soul. The dry bones lived —formal devotions were turned into joyous acts of faith and piety. The Church became a Living Witness to the Truth. She could be interrogated —she could answer. The old calendar was revived, and Saint's Day followed Saint's Day, and season season, in the sweet procession of the Christian

Year. Pretty girls got up early, made the sign of the Cross, and, unscared by devils, tripped across the dewy meadows to Communion. Grave men read the Fathers, and found themselves at home in the Fourth Century.

A great writer had, so it appears, all unconsciously prepared the way for this Neo-Catholicism. Dr. Newman has never forgotten to pay tribute to Sir Walter Scott.

Sir Walter's work has proved to be of so permanent a character, his insight into all things Scotch so deep and true, and his human worth and excellence so rare and noble, that it has hardly been worth while to remember the froth and effervescence he at first occasioned; but that he did create a movement in the Oxford direction is certain. He made the old Catholic times interesting. He was not indeed, like the Tractarians, a man of "primitive" mind; but he was romantic, and it all told. For this we have the evidence not only of Dr. Newman (a very nice observer), but also of the delightful, the bewitching, the never-sufficiently-to-be-praised George Borrow—Borrow, the Friend of Man, at whose bidding lassitude and languor strike their tents and flee; and health and spirits, adventure and human comradeship, take up the reins of life, whistle to the horses, and away you go!

Borrow has indeed, in the Appendix to *The Romany Rye*, written of Sir Walter after a fashion for which I hope he has been forgiven. A piece of invective more terrible, more ungenerous, more savagely and exultingly cruel, is nowhere to be found. I shudder when I think of it. Had another

written it, nothing he ever wrote should be in the same room with *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Redgauntlet*, and *The Antiquary*. I am not going to get angry with George Borrow. I say at once—I cannot afford it. But neither am I going to quote from the Appendix. God forbid! I can find elsewhere what will suit my purpose just as well. Readers of *Lavengro* will remember the Man in Black. It is hard to forget him, the scandalous creature, or his story of the ironmonger's daughter at Birmingham "who screeches to the piano the Lady of the Lake's hymn to the Virgin Mary, always weeps when Mary Queen of Scots is mentioned, and fasts on the anniversary of the death of that very wise martyr, Charles I. Why," said the Man in Black, "I would engage to convert such an idiot to popery in a week, were it worth my trouble. O Cavaliere Gualtiero, avete fatto molto in favore della Santa Sede!"

Another precursor was Coleridge, who (amongst other things) called attention to the writings of the earlier Anglican divines—some of whom were men of primitive tempers and Catholic aspirations. Andrews and Laud, Jackson, Bull, Hammond and Thorndyke—sound divines to a man—found the dust brushed off them. The second-hand booksellers, a wily and observant race, became alive to the fact that though Paley and Warburton, Horsley and Hoadley, were not worth the brown paper they came wrapped up in, seventeenth-century theology would bear being marked high.

Thus was the long Polar Winter that had befallen Anglican theology broken up, and the icebergs began moving about after a haphazard

and even dangerous fashion—but motion is always something.

What has come to the Movement? It is hard to say. Its great leader has written a book of fascinating interest to prove that it was not a genuine Anglican movement at all; that it was foreign to the National Church, and that neither was its life derived from, nor was its course in the direction of, the National Church. But this was after he himself had joined the Church of Rome. Nobody, however, ventured to contradict him, nor is this surprising when we remember the profusion of argument and imagery with which he supported his case.

A point was reached, and then things were allowed to drop. The Church of Rome received some distinguished converts with her usual well-bred composure, and gave them little things to do in their new places. The *Tracts for the Times*, neatly bound, repose on many shelves. Tract No. 90, that fierce bomb-shell which once scattered confusion through clerical circles, is perhaps the only bit of Dr. Newman's writing one does not, on thinking of, wish to sit down at once to re-read. The fact is that the movement, as a movement with a *terminus ad quem*, was fairly beaten by a power fit to be matched with Rome herself—John Bullism. John Bull could not be got to assume a Catholic demeanour. When his judges denied that the grace of Baptism was a dogma of his faith, Bull, instead of behaving as did the people of Milan when Ambrose was persecuted by an Arian Government, was hugely pleased, clapped his thigh, and exclaimed, through the mouth of Lord

John Russell, that the ruling was "sure to give general satisfaction," as indeed it did.

The work of the movement can still be seen in the new spirit that has descended upon the Church of England and in the general heightening of Church principles; but the movement itself is no longer to be seen, or much of the temper or modes of thought of the Tractarians. The High Church clergyman of to-day is no Theologian—he is an Opportunist. The Tractarian took his stand upon Antiquity—he laboured his points, he was always ready to prove his Rule of Faith and to define his position. His successor, though he has appropriated the results of the struggle, does not trouble to go on waging it. He is as a rule no great reader —you may often search his scanty library in vain for the works of Bishop Jackson. Were you to ask for them, it is quite possible he would not know to what bishop of that name you were referring. He is as hazy about the Hypostatic Union as are many laymen about the Pragmatic Sanction. He is all for the People and for filling his Church. The devouring claims of the Church of Rome do not disturb his peace of mind. He thinks it very rude of her to dispute the validity of his orders—but, then, foreigners are rude! And so he goes on his hard-working way, with his high doctrines and his early services, and has neither time nor inclination for those studies that lend support to his priestly pretensions.

This temper of mind has given us peace in our time, and has undoubtedly promoted the cause of Temperance and other good works; but some day or another the old questions will have to be

gone into again, and the Anglican claim to be a Church, Visible, Continuous, Catholic, and Gifted, investigated—probably for the last time.

Cynics may declare that it will be but a storm in a teacup—a dispute in which none but "women, priests, and peers" will be called upon to take part—but it is not an obviously wise policy to be totally indifferent to what other people are thinking about—simply because your own thoughts are running in other directions.

But all this is really no concern of mine. My object is to call attention to Dr. Newman's writings from a purely literary point of view.

The charm of Dr. Newman's style necessarily baffles description: as well might one seek to analyse the fragrance of a flower, or to expound in words the jumping of one's heart when a beloved friend unexpectedly enters the room. It is hard to describe charm. Mr. Matthew Arnold, who is a poet, gets near it:

> And what but gentleness untired,
> And what but noble feeling warm,
> Wherever shown, howe'er inspired,
> Is grace, is charm?

One can, of course, heap on words. Dr. Newman's style is pellucid, it is animated, it is varied; at times icy cold, it oftener glows with a fervent heat; it employs as its obedient and well-trained servant a vast vocabulary, and it does so always with the ease of the educated gentleman, who by a sure instinct ever avoids alike the ugly pedantry of the book-worm, the forbidding accents of the lawyer, and the stiff conceit of the man of scientific theory. Dr. Newman's sentences sometimes fall upon the

ear like well-considered and final judgments, each word being weighed and counted out with dignity and precision; but at other times the demeanour and language of the judge are hastily abandoned, and, substituted for them, we encounter the impetuous torrent—the captivating rhetoric, the brilliant imagery, the frequent examples, the repetition of the same idea in different words, of the eager and accomplished advocate addressing men of like passions with himself.

Dr. Newman always aims at effect, and never misses it. He writes as an orator speaks, straight at you. His object is to convince, and to convince by engaging your attention, exciting your interest, enlivening your fancy. It is not his general practice to address the pure reason. He knows (he well may) how little reason has to do with men's convictions. "I do not want," he says, "to be converted by a smart syllogism." In another place he observes: "The heart is commonly reached not through the reason—but through the imagination by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history and by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, books subdue us, deeds inflame us." I have elsewhere ventured upon a comparison between Burke and Newman. Both men, despite their subtlety and learning and super-refinement, their love of fine points and their splendid capacity for stating them in language so apt as to make one's admiration breathless, took very broad, common-sense, matter-of-fact views of humanity, and ever had the ordinary man and woman in mind as they spoke and wrote. Politics and

Religion existed, in their opinion, for the benefit of plain folk, for Richard and for Jane, or, in other words, for living bundles of hopes and fears, doubts and certainties, prejudices and passions. Anarchy and Atheism are in their opinion the two great enemies of the Human Race. How are they to be frustrated and confounded, men and women being what they are? Dr. Newman, recluse though he is, has always got the world stretched out before him; its unceasing roar sounds in his ear as does the murmur of ocean in the far inland shell. In one of his Catholic Sermons, the sixth of his Discourses to Mixed Congregations, there is a gorgeous piece of rhetoric in which he describes the people looking in at the shop-windows and reading advertisements in the newspapers. Many of his pages positively glow with light and heat and colour. One is at times reminded of Fielding. And all this comparing, and distinguishing, and illustrating, and appealing, and describing, is done with the practised hand of a consummate writer and orator. He is as subtle as Gladstone, and as moving as Erskine; but whereas Gladstone is occasionally clumsy, and Erskine was frequently crude, Newman is never clumsy, Newman is never crude, but always graceful, always mellowed.

Humour he possesses in a marked degree. A quiet humour, of course, as befits his sober profession and the gravity of the subjects on which he loves to discourse. It is not the humour that is founded on a lively sense of the incongruous. This kind, though the most delightful of all, is apt, save in the hands of the great masters, the men whom you can count upon your fingers, to

wear a slightly professional aspect. It happens unexpectedly, but all the same we expect it to happen, and we have got our laughter ready. Newman's quiet humour always takes us unawares, and is accepted gratefully, partly on account of its intrinsic excellence, and partly because we are glad to find that the

Pilgrim pale with Paul's sad girdle bound

has room for mirth in his heart.

In sarcasm Dr. Newman is pre-eminent. Here his extraordinary powers of compression, which are little short of marvellous in one who has also such a talent for expansion, come to his aid and enable him to squeeze into a couple of sentences pleadings, argument, judgment, and execution. Had he led the secular life, and adopted a Parliamentary career, he would have been simply terrific, for his weapons of offence are both numerous and deadly. His sentences stab—his invective destroys. The pompous high-placed imbecile mouthing his platitudes, the wordy sophister with his oven full of half-baked thoughts, the ill-bred rhetorician with his tawdry aphorisms, the heartless hate-producing satirist, would have gone down before his sword and spear. But God was merciful to these sinners: Newman became a Priest and they Privy Councillors.

And lastly, all these striking qualities and gifts float about in a pleasant atmosphere. As there are some days even in England when merely to go out and breathe the common air is joy, and when, in consequence, that grim tyrant, our bosom's lord,

Sits lightly in his throne,

so, to take up almost any one of Dr. Newman's

books, and they are happily numerous—between twenty and thirty volumes—is to be led away from "evil tongues," and the "sneers of selfish men," from the mud and the mire, the shoving and pushing that gather and grow round the pig-troughs of life, into a diviner ether, a purer air, and is to spend your time in the company of one who, though he may sometimes astonish, yet never fails to make you feel (to use Carlyle's words about a very different author) "that you have passed your evening well and nobly, as in a temple of wisdom, not ill and disgracefully as in brawling tavern supper-rooms with fools and noisy persons."

The tendency to be egotistical noticeable in some persons who are free from the faintest taint of egotism is a tendency hard to account for—but delightful to watch.

"Anything," says glorious John Dryden, "though ever so little, which a man speaks of himself—in my opinion, is still too much." A sound opinion most surely, and yet how interesting are the personal touches we find scattered up and down Dryden's noble prefaces. So with Newman—his dignity, his self-restraint, his taste, are all the greatest stickler for a stiff upper lip and the consumption of your own smoke could desire, and yet the personal note is frequently sounded. He is never afraid to strike it when the perfect harmony that exists between his character and his style demands its sound, and so it has come about that we love what he has written because he wrote it, and we love him who wrote it because of what he has written.

I now approach by far the pleasantest part of

my task, namely, the selection of two or three passages from Dr. Newman's books by way of illustrating what I have taken the liberty to say are notable characteristics of his style.

Let me begin with a chance specimen of the precision of his language. The passage is from the prefatory notice the Cardinal prefixed to the Rev. William Palmer's *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church in the Years* 1840, 1841. It is dated 1882, and is consequently the writing of a man over eighty years of age:

> William Palmer was one of those earnest-minded and devout men, forty years since, who, deeply convinced of the great truth that out Lord had instituted, and still acknowledges and protects, a Visible Church—one, individual, and integral; Catholic, as spread over the earth, Apostolic, as coeval with the Apostles of Christ, and Holy, as being the dispenser of His Word and Sacraments—considered it at present to exist in three main branches, or rather in a triple presence, the Latin, the Greek, and the Anglican, these three being one and the same Church distinguishable from each other by secondary, fortuitous, and local, though important characteristics. And whereas the whole Church in its fullness was, as they believed, at once and severally Anglican, Greek, and Latin, so in turn each one of those three was the whole Church; whence it followed that, whenever any one of the three was present, the other two, by the nature of the case, were absent, and therefore the three could not have direct relations with each other, as if they were three substantive bodies, there being no real difference between them except the external accident of place. Moreover, since, as has been said, on a given territory there could not be more than one of the three, it followed that Christians generally, wherever they were, were bound to recognise, and had a claim to be recognised by that one; ceasing to belong to the Anglican Church, as Angelican, when they were at Rome, and ignoring Rome, as Rome, when they found themselves at Moscow. Lastly, not to acknowledge this inevitable outcome of the initial idea of the Church, viz., that it was both everywhere and one, was bad logic, and to act in opposition to it was nothing short of setting up altar against altar, that is the hideous sin of schism, and a sacrilege. This I conceive to be the formal teaching of Anglicanism.

The most carefully considered judgments of Lord Westbury or Lord Cairns may be searched in vain for finer examples of stern accuracy and beautiful aptness of language.

For examples of what may be called Newman's oratorical rush, one has not far to look—though when torn from their context and deprived of their conclusion they are robbed of three-fourths of their power. Here is a passage from his second lecture addressed to the Anglican Party of 1833. It is on the Life of the National Church of England.

> Doubtless the National Religion is alive. It is a great power in the midst of us, it wields an enormous influence; it represses a hundred foes; it conducts a hundred undertakings; it attracts men to it, uses them, rewards them; it has thousands of beautiful homes up and down the country where quiet men may do its work and benefit its people; it collects vast sums in the shape of voluntary offerings, and with them it builds churches, prints and distributes innumerable Bibles, books, and tracts, and sustains missionaries in all parts of the earth. In all parts of the earth it opposes the Catholic Church, denounces her as anti-Christian, bribes the world against her, obstructs her influence, apes her authority, and confuses her evidence. In all parts of the world it is the religion of gentlemen, of scholars, of men of substance, and men of no personal faith at all. If this be life, if it be life to impart a tone to the Court and Houses of Parliament, to Ministers of State, to law and literature, to universities and schools, and to society, if it be life to be a principle of order in the population, and an organ of benevolence and almsgiving towards the poor, if it be life to make men decent, respectable, and sensible, to embellish and reform the family circle, to deprive vice of its grossness and to shed a glow over avarice and ambition; if, indeed, it is the life of religion to be the first jewel in the Queen's crown, and the highest step of her throne, then doubtless the National Church is replete, it overflows with life; but the question has still to be answered: life of what kind?

For a delightful example of Dr. Newman's humour, which is largely, if not entirely, a playful humour, I will remind the reader of the celebrated

imaginary speech against the British Constitution attributed to "a member of the junior branch of the Potemkin family," and supposed to have been delivered at Moscow in the year 1850. It is too long for quotation, but will be found in the first of the *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*. The whole book is one of the best humoured books in the English language.

Of his sarcasm, the following example, well-known as it is, must be given. It occurs in the *Essay on the Prospects of the Anglican Church*, which is reprinted from the *British Critic* in the first volume of the *Essays Critical and Historical*.

> In the present day mistiness is the mother of wisdom. A man who can set down half a dozen general propositions, which escape from destroying one another only by being diluted into truisms, who can hold the balance between opposites so skilfully as to do without fulcrum or beam, who never enunciates a truth without guarding himself from being supposed to exclude the contradictory, who holds that Scripture is the only authority—yet that the Church is to be deferred to, that faith only justifies, yet that it does not justify without works, that grace does not depend on the sacraments, yet is not given without them, that bishops are a divine ordinance—yet those who have them not are in the same religious condition as those who have—this is your safe man and the hope of the Church; this is what the Church is said to want, not party men, but sensible, temperate, sober, well-judging persons to guide it through the channel of No-meaning, between the Scylla and Charybdis of Aye and No. But, alas! reading sets men thinking. They will not keep standing in that very attitude, which you please to call sound Church-of-Englandism or orthodox Protestantism. It tires them, it is so very awkward, and for the life of them they cannot continue in it long together, where there is neither article nor canon to lean against—they cannot go on for ever standing on one leg, or sitting without a chair, or walking with their legs tied, or grazing like Tityrus's stags on the air. Premises imply conclusions—germs lead to developments; principles have issues; doctrines lead to action.

Of the personal note to which I have made

reference, no examples need or should be given. Such things must not be transplanted from their own homes.

> The delicate shells lay on the shore;
> The bubbles of the latest wave
> Fresh pearl to their enamel gave;
> And the bellowing of the savage sea
> Greeted their safe escape to me.
> I wiped away the weeds and foam
> And brought my sea-born treasures home:
> But the poor, unsightly noisome things
> Had left their beauty on the shore,
> With the sun and the sand and the wild uproar.

If I may suppose this paper read by someone who is not yet acquainted with Newman's writings, I would advise him, unless he is bent on theology, to begin not with the *Sermons*, not even with the *Apologia*, but with the *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*. Then let him take up the *Lectures on the Idea of a University*, and on *University Subjects*. These may be followed by *Discussions and Arguments*, after which he will be well disposed to read the *Lectures on the Difficulties felt by Anglicans*. If after he has despatched these volumes he is not infected with what one of those charging Bishops called "Newmania," he is possessed of a devil of obtuseness no wit of man can expel.

Of the strength of Dr. Newman's philosophical position, which he has explained in his *Grammar of Assent*, it would ill become me to speak. He there strikes the shield of John Locke. *Non nostrum est tantas componere lites*. But it is difficult for the most ignorant of us not to have shy notions and lurking suspicions even about such big subjects and great men. Locke maintained that a man's

belief in a proposition really depended upon and bore a relation to the weight of evidence forthcoming in its favour. Dr. Newman asserts that certainty is a quality of propositions, and he has discovered in man "an illative sense" whereby conclusions are converted into dogmas and a measured concurrence into an unlimited and absolute assurance. This illative sense is hardly a thing (if I may use an expression for ever associated with Lord Macaulay) to be cocksure about. Wedges, said the mediæval mechanic to his pupils, split wood by virtue of a wood-splitting quality in wedges—but now we are indisposed to endow wedges with qualities, and if not wedges, why propositions? But the *Grammar of Assent* is a beautiful book, and with a quotation from it I will close my quotations:

> Thus it is that Christianity is the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham and of the Mosaic revelations; this is how it has been able from the first to occupy the world, and gain a hold on every class of human society to which its preachers reached; this is why the Roman power and the multitude of religions which it embraced could not stand against it; this is the secret of its sustained energy, and its never-flagging martyrdoms; this is how at present it is so mysteriously potent, in spite of the new and fearful adversaries which beset its path. It has with it that gift of stanching and healing the one deep wound of human nature which avails more for its success than a full encyclopædia of scientific knowledge and a whole library of controversy, and therefore it must last while human nature lasts.

It is fitting that our last quotation should be one which leaves the Cardinal face to face with his faith.

Dr. Newman's poetry cannot be passed over without a word, though I am ill-fitted to do it justice. "Lead, kindly light" has forced its way

into every hymn-book and heart. Those who go, and those who do not go to church, the fervent believer and the tired-out sceptic, here meet on common ground. The language of the verses in their intense sincerity seems to reduce all human feelings, whether fed on dogmas and holy rites or on man's own sad heart, to a common denominator.

> The night is dark, and I am far from home,
> Lead Thou me on.

The believer can often say no more. The unbeliever will never willingly say less.

Amongst Dr. Newman's *Verses on Various Occasions*—though in some cases the earlier versions to be met with in the *Lyra Apostolica* are to be preferred to the later—poems will be found by those who seek, conveying sure and certain evidence of the possession by the poet of the true lyrical gift—though almost cruelly controlled by the course of the poet's thoughts and the nature of his subjects. One is sometimes constrained to cry, "Oh, if he could only get out into the wild blowing airs, how his pinions would sweep the skies!" but such thoughts are unlicensed and unseemly. That we have two such religious poets as Cardinal Newman and Miss Christina Rossetti is or ought to be matter for sincere rejoicing.

II

To the inveterate truth-hunter there has been much of melancholy in the very numerous estimates, hasty estimates no doubt, but all manifestly sincere, which the death of Cardinal Newman has occasioned.

The nobility of the pursuit after truth wherever the pursuit may lead has been abundantly recognised. Nobody has been base enough or cynical enough to venture upon a sneer. It has been marvellous to notice what a hold an unpopular thinker, dwelling very far apart from the trodden paths of English life and thought, had obtained upon men's imaginations. The " man in the street " was to be heard declaring that the dead Cardinal was a fine fellow. The newspaper-makers were astonished at the interest displayed by their readers. How many of these honest mourners, asked the *Globe*, have read a page of Newman's writings? It is a vain inquiry. Newman's books have long had a large and increasing sale. They stand on all sorts of shelves, and wherever they go a still, small voice accompanies them. They are speaking books; an air breathes from their pages.

> Again I saw and I confess'd
> Thy speech was rare and high,
> And yet it vex'd my burden'd breast,
> And scared I knew not why.

It is a strange criticism that recently declared Newman's style to lack individuality. Oddity it lacked, and mannerisms, but not, so it seems to us, individuality.

But this wide recognition of Newman's charm both of character and style cannot conceal from the anxious truth-hunter that there has been an almost equally wide recognition of the futility of Newman's method and position.

Method and position? These were sacred words with the Cardinal. But a few days ago he seemed securely posed before the world. It cannot surely

have been his unrivalled dialectics only that made men keep civil tongues in their heads or hesitate to try conclusions with him. It was rather, we presume, that there was no especial occasion to speak of him otherwise than with the respect and affection due to honoured age. But when he is dead—it is different. It is necessary then to gauge his method and to estimate his influence, not as a living man, but as a dead one.

And what has that estimate been? The saintly life, the mysterious presence, are admitted, and well-nigh nothing else. All sorts of reasons are named, some plausible, all cunningly contrived, to account for Newman's quarrel with the Church of his baptism. A writer in the *Guardian* suggests one, a writer in the *Times* another, a writer in the *Saturday Review* a third, and so on.

However much these reasons may differ one from another, they all agree in this, that of necessity they have ceased to operate. They were personal reasons, and perished with the man whose faith and actions they controlled. Nobody else, it has been throughout assumed, will become a Romanist for the same reasons as John Henry Newman. If he had not been brought up an Evangelical, if he had learnt German, if he had married, if he had been made an archdeacon, all would have been different.

There is something positively terrible in this natural history of opinion. All the passion and the pleading of a life, the thought and the labour, the sustained argument, the library of books, reduced to what?—a series of accidents!

Newman himself well knew this aspect of affairs.

No one's plummet since Pascal's had taken deeper soundings of the infirmity—the oceanic infirmity —of the intellect. What actuary, he asks contemptuously, can appraise the value of a man's opinions? In how many a superb passage does he exhibit the absurd, the haphazard fashion in which men and women collect the odds and ends, the bits and scraps they are pleased to place in the museum of their minds, and label, in all good faith, their convictions! Newman almost revels in such subjects. The solemn pomposity which so frequently dignifies with the name of research or inquiry feeble scratchings amongst heaps of verbosity had no more determined foe than the Cardinal.

But now the same measure is being meted out to him, and we are told of a thinker's life—it is nought.

He thought he had constructed a way of escape from the City of Destruction for himself and his followers across the bridge of that illative sense which turns conclusions into assents, and opinions into faiths—but the bridge seems no longer standing.

The writer in the *Guardian*, who attributes Newman's restlessness in the English Church to the smug and comfortable life of many of its clergy rather than to any especial craving after authority, no doubt wrote with knowledge.

A married clergy seemed always to annoy Newman. Readers of *Loss and Gain* are not likely to forget the famous "pork chop" passage, which describes a young parson and his bride bustling into a stationer's shop to buy hymnals and tracts. What was once only annoyance at some of the ways of John Bull on his knees, soon ripened into something not very unlike hatred.

Never was any invention less *ben trovato* than that which used to describe Newman as pining after the "incomparable liturgy" or the "cultured society" of the Church of England. He hated *ex animo* all those aspects of Anglicanism which best recommend it to Erastian minds. A church of which sanctity is *not* a note is sure to have many friends.

The *Saturday Review* struck up a fine, national tune:

> An intense but narrow conception of personal holiness, and personal satisfaction with dogma, ate him (Newman) up—the natural legacy of the Evangelical school in which he had been nursed, the great tradition of Tory churchmanship, of *pride in the Church of England, as such,* of determination to stand shoulder to shoulder in resisting the foreigner, whether he came from Rome or from Geneva, from Tübingen, or from Saint Sulpice, of the union of all social and intellectual culture with theological learning—the idea which, alone of all such ideas, has made education patriotic, and orthodoxy generous, made insufficient appeal to him, and for want of it he himself made shipwreck.

Here is John Bullism, bold and erect. If the Ark of Peter won't hoist the Union Jack, John Bull must have an Ark to himself, with patriotic clergy of his own manufacture tugging at the oar, and with nothing foreign in the hold save some sound old port. "It will always be remembered to Newman's credit," says this same reviewer, "that he knew good wine if he did not drink much." Mark the "if"; there is much virtue in it.

We are now provided with two causes of Newman's discomfort in the Church of England—its too comfortable clergy, and its too frequent introduction of the lion and the unicorn amongst the symbols of religion—both effective causes, as may be proved by many passages; but to say that

either or both availed to drive him out, and compelled him to seek shelter at the hands of one whom he had long regarded as a foe, is to go very far indeed.

It should not be overlooked that these minimisers of Newman's influence are all firmly attached for different reasons to the institution Newman left. Their judgments therefore cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged. What Disraeli meant when he said that Newman's secession had dealt the Church of England a blow under which it still reeled, was that by this act Newman expressed before the whole world his profound conviction that our so-called National Church was not a branch of the Church Catholic. And this really is the point of weakness upon which Newman hurled himself. This is the damage he did to the Church of this island. Throughout all his writings, in a hundred places, in jests and sarcasms as well as in papers and arguments, there crops up this settled conviction that England is not a Catholic country, and that John Bull is not a member of the Catholic Church.

This may not matter much to the British electorate; but to those who care about such things, who rely upon the validity of orders and the efficacy of sacraments, who need a pedigree for their faith, who do not agree with Emerson that if a man would be great he must be a Non-conformist—over these people it would be rash to assume that Newman's influence is spent. The general effect of his writings, the demands they awaken, the spirit they breathe, are all hostile to Anglicanism. They create a profound dissatisfac-

tion with, a distaste for, the Church of England as by law established. Those who are affected by this spirit will no longer be able comfortably to enjoy the maimed rites and practices of their Church. They will feel their place is elsewhere, and sooner or later they will pack up and go. It is far too early in the day to leave Newman out of sight.

But to end where we began. There has been scant recognition in the Cardinal's case of the usefulness of devoting life to anxious inquiries after truth. It is very noble to do so, and when you come to die, the newspapers, from the *Times* to the *Sporting Life*, will, in the first place, point out, after their superior fashion, how much better was this pure-minded and unworldly thinker than the soiled politician, full of opportunism and inconsistency, trying hard to drown the echoes of his past with his loud vociferations, and then proceed in a few short sentences to establish how out of date is this Thinker's thought, how false his reasoning, how impossible his conclusions, and lastly, how dead his influence.

It is very puzzling and difficult, and drives some men to collect butterflies and beetles. Thinkers are not, however, to be disposed of by scratches of the pen. A Cardinal of the Roman Church is not, to say the least of it, more obviously a shipwreck than a dean or even a bishop of the English establishment. Character, too, counts for something. Of Newman it may be said:

> Fate gave what chance shall not control,
> His sad lucidity of soul.

But the truth-hunter is still unsatisfied.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

1892

I

THE news of Mr. Arnold's sudden death at Liverpool struck a chill into many hearts, for although a somewhat constrained writer (despite his playfulness) and certainly the least boisterous of men, he was yet most distinctly on the side of human enjoyment. He conspired and contrived to make things pleasant. Pedantry he abhorred. He was a man of this life and this world. A severe critic of the world he indeed was, but finding himself in it and not precisely knowing what is beyond it, like a brave and true-hearted man he set himself to make the best of it. Its sight and sounds were dear to him. The "uncrumpling fern," the eternal moon-lit snow, "Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell," "the red grouse springing at our sound," the tinkling bells of the "high-pasturing kine," the vagaries of men, women, and dogs, their odd ways and tricks, whether of mind or manner, all delighted, amused, tickled him. Human loves, joys, sorrows, human relationships, ordinary ties interested him:

> The help in strife,
> The thousand sweet still joys of such
> As hand in hand face earthly life.

In a sense of the words which is noble and blessed, he was of the earth earthy.

In his earlier days Mr. Arnold was much misunderstood. That rowdy Philistine the *Daily Telegraph* called him "a prophet of the kid-glove persuasion," and his own too frequent iteration of the somewhat dandiacal phrase "sweetness and light" helped to promote the notion that he was a fanciful, finikin Oxonian,

A fine puss gentleman that's all perfume,

quite unfit for the most ordinary wear and tear of life. He was in reality nothing of the kind, though his literary style was a little in keeping with this false conception. His mind was based on the plainest possible things. What he hated most was the fantastic—the far-fetched, all elaborated fancies, and strained interpretations. He stuck to the beaten track of human experience, and the broader the better. He was a plain-sailing man. This is his true note. In his much criticised, but as I think admirable introduction to the selection he made from Wordsworth's poems, he admits that the famous *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections in Early Childhood* is not one of his prime favourites, and in that connection he quotes from Thucydides the following judgment on the early exploits of the Greek Race and applies it to these intimations of immortality in babies. "It is impossible to speak with certainty of what is so remote, but from all that we can really investigate I should say that they were no very great things."

This quotation is in Mr. Arnold's own vein. His readers will have no difficulty in calling to mind numerous instances in which his dislike of everything not broadly based on the generally admitted

facts of sane experience manifests itself. Though fond—perhaps exceptionally fond—of pretty things and sayings, he had a severe taste, and hated whatever struck him as being in the least degree sickly, or silly, or over-heated. No doubt he may often have considered that to be sickly or silly which in the opinion of others was pious and becoming. It may be that he was over-impatient of men's flirtations with futurity. As his paper on Professor Dowden's *Life of Shelley* shows, he disapproved of "irregular relations." He considered we were all married to plain Fact, and objected to our carrying on a flirtation with mystic maybe's and calling it Religion. Had it been a man's duty to believe in a specific revelation it would have been God's duty to make that revelation credible. Such, at all events, would appear to have been the opinion of this remarkable man, who though he had even more than his share of an Oxonian's reverence for the great Bishop of Durham, was unable to admit the force of the main argument of *The Analogy*. Mr. Arnold was indeed too fond of parading his inability for hard reasoning. I am not, he keeps saying, like the Archbishop of York, or the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. There was affectation about this, for his professed inferiority did not prevent him from making it almost excruciatingly clear that in his opinion those gifted prelates were, whilst exercising their extraordinary powers, only beating the air, or in plainer words busily engaged in talking nonsense. But I must not wander from my point, which simply is that Arnold's dislike of anything recondite or remote was intense, genuine, and characteristic.

He always asserted himself to be a good Liberal. So in truth he was. A better Liberal than many a one whose claim to that title it would be thought absurd to dispute. He did not indeed care very much about some of the articles of the Liberal creed as now professed. He had taken a great dislike to the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill. He wished the Church and the State to continue to recognise each other. He had not that jealousy of State interference in England which used to be (it is so no longer) a note of political Liberalism. He sympathised with Italian national aspirations because he thought it wrong to expect a country with such a past as Italy to cast in her lot with Austria. He did not sympathise with Irish national aspirations because he thought Ireland ought to be willing to admit that she was relatively to England an inferior and less interesting country, and therefore one which had no moral claim for national institutions. He may have been right or wrong on these points without affecting his claim to be considered a Liberal. Liberalism is not a creed, but a frame of mind. Mr. Arnold's frame of mind was Liberal. No living man is more deeply permeated with the grand doctrine of Equality than was he. He wished to see his countrymen and countrywomen all equal: Jack as good as his master, and Jack's master as good as Jack; and neither talking clap-trap. He had a hearty un-English dislike of anomalies and absurdities. He fully appreciated the French Revolution and was consequently a Democrat. He was not a Democrat from irresistible impulse, or from love of mischief, or from hatred of priests, or, like the average

British workman, from a not unnatural desire to get something on account of his share of the family inheritance—but all roads lead to Rome, and Mr. Arnold was a Democrat from a sober and partly sorrowful conviction that no other form of government was possible. He was an Educationalist, and Education is the true Leveller. His almost passionate cry for better middle-class education arose from his annoyance at the exclusion of large numbers of this great class from the best education the country afforded. It was a ticklish job telling this great, wealthy middle class—which according to the newspapers had made England what she is and what everybody else wished to be—that it was, from an educational point of view, beneath contempt. "I hear with surprise," said Sir Thomas Bazley at Manchester, "that the education of our great middle class requires improvement." But Mr. Arnold had courage. Indeed, he carried one kind of courage to a heroic pitch. I mean the courage of repeating yourself over and over again. It is a sound forensic maxim: Tell a judge twice whatever you want him to hear. Tell a special jury thrice, and a common jury half-a-dozen times the view of a case you wish them to entertain. Mr. Arnold treated the middle class as a common jury and hammered away at them remorselessly and with the most unblushing iteration. They groaned under him, they snorted, and they sniffed—but they listened, and, what was more to the purpose, their children listened, and with filial frankness told their heavy sires that Mr. Arnold was quite right, and that their lives were dull, and hideous, and arid, even as he described

them as being. Mr. Arnold's work as a School Inspector gave him great opportunities of going about amongst all classes of the people. Though not exactly apostolic in manner or method, he had something to say both to and of everybody. The aristocracy were polite and had ways he admired, but they were impotent of ideas and had a dangerous tendency to become studiously frivolous. Consequently the Future did not belong to them. Get ideas and study gravity, was the substance of his discourse to the Barbarians, as, with that trick of his of miscalling God's creatures, he had the effrontery to dub our adorable nobility. But it was the middle class upon whom fell the full weight of his discourse. His sermons to them would fill a volume. Their great need was culture, which he declared to be *a study of perfection*, the sentiment for beauty and sweetness, the sentiment against hideousness and rawness. The middle class, he protested, needed to know all the best things that have been said and done in the world since it began, and to be thereby lifted out of their holes and corners, private academies and chapels in side streets, above their tenth-rate books and miserable preferences, into the main stream of national existence. The lower orders he judged to be a mere rabble, and thought it was as yet impossible to predict whether or not they would hereafter display any aptitude for Ideas, or passion for Perfection. But in the meantime he bade them learn to cohere, and to read and write, and above all he conjured them not to imitate the middle classes.

It is not easy to know everything about everybody, and it may be doubted whether Mr. Arnold

did not over-rate the degree of acquaintance with his countrymen his peregrinations among them had conferred upon him. In certain circles he was supposed to have made the completest possible diagnosis of dissent, and was credited with being able, after five minutes' conversation with any individual Nonconformist, unerringly to assign him to his particular chapel, Independent, Baptist, Primitive Methodist, Unitarian, or whatever else it might be, and this though they had only been talking about the weather. To people who know nothing about Dissenters, Mr. Arnold might well seem to know everything. However, he did know a great deal, and used his knowledge with great cunning and effect, and a fine instinctive sense of the whereabouts of the weakest points. Mr. Arnold's sense for equality and solidarity was not impeded by any exclusive tastes or hobbies. Your collector, even though it be but of butterflies, is rarely a democrat. One of Arnold's favourite lines in Wordsworth was

> Joy that is in widest commonalty spread.

The collector's joys are not of that kind. Mr. Arnold was not, I believe, a collector of anything. He certainly was not of books. I once told him I had been reading a pamphlet, written by him in 1859, on the Italian Question. He inquired how I came across it. I said I had picked it up in a shop. "Oh, yes," said he, "some old curiosity shop, I suppose." Nor was he joking. He seemed quite to suppose that old books, and old clothes, and old chairs were huddled together for sale in the same resort of the curious. He did not care

about such things. The prices given for the early editions of his own poems seemed to tease him. His literary taste was broadly democratic. He had no mind for fished-up authors, nor did he ever indulge in swaggering rhapsodies over second-rate poets. The best was good enough for him. "The best poetry" was what he wanted, "a clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it." So he wrote in his general introduction to Mr. Ward's *Selections from the English Poets*. The best of everything for everybody. This was his gospel and his prayer.

Approaching Mr. Arnold's writings more nearly, it seems inevitable to divide them into three classes. His poems, his theological excursions, and his criticism, using the last word in a wide sense as including a criticism of life and of politics as well as of books and style.

Of Mr. Arnold's poetry it is hard for anyone who has felt it to the full during the most impressionable period of life to speak without emotion overcoming reason.

> Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
> Hopes and fears, belief and unbelieving.

It is easy to admit, in general terms, its limitations. Mr. Arnold is the last man in the world anybody would wish to shove out of his place. A poet at all points, armed cap-à-pie against criticism, like Lord Tennyson, he certainly was not. Nor had his verse any share of the boundless vitality, the fierce pulsation, so nobly characteristic of Mr. Browning. But these admissions made, we decline

to parley any further with the enemy. We cast him behind us. Mr. Arnold, to those who cared for him at all, was the most *useful* poet of his day. He lived much nearer us than poets of his distinction usually do. He was neither a prophet nor a recluse. He lived neither above us, nor away from us. There are two ways of being a recluse—a poet may live remote from men, or he may live in a crowded street but remote from their thoughts. Mr. Arnold did neither, and consequently his verse tells and tingles. None of it is thrown away. His readers feel that he bore the same yoke as themselves. Theirs is a common bondage with his. Beautiful, surpassingly beautiful some of Mr. Arnold's poetry is, but we seize upon the *thought* first and delight in the *form* afterwards. No doubt the form is an extraordinary comfort, for the thoughts are often, as thoughts so widely spread could not fail to be, the very thoughts that are too frequently expressed rudely, crudely, indelicately. To open Mr. Arnold's poems is to escape from a heated atmosphere and a company not wholly free from offence even though composed of those who share our opinions—from loud-mouthed random-talking men into a well-shaded retreat which seems able to impart, even to our feverish persuasions and crude conclusions, something of the coolness of falling water, something of the music of rustling trees. This union of thought, substantive thought, with beauty of form —of strength with elegance, is rare. I doubt very much whether Mr. Arnold ever realised the devotedness his verse inspired in the minds of thousands of his countrymen and countrywomen, both in the

old world and the new. He is not a bulky poet. Three volumes contain him. But hardly a page can be opened without the eye lighting on verse which at one time or another has been, either to you or to someone dear to you, strength or joy. The *Buried Life*, *A Southern Night*, *Dover Beach*, *A Wanderer is Man from his Birth*, *Rugby Chapel*, *Resignation*. How easy to prolong the list, and what a list it is! Their very names are dear to us, even as are the names of Mother Churches and Holy Places to the votaries of the old Religion. I read the other day in the *Spectator* newspaper, an assertion that Mr. Arnold's poetry had never consoled anybody. A falser statement was never made innocently. It may never have consoled the writer in the *Spectator*, but because the stomach of a dram-drinker rejects cold water is no kind of reason for a sober man abandoning his morning tumbler of the pure element. Mr. Arnold's poetry has been found full of consolation. It would be strange if it had not been. It is no

> Stretched metre of an antique song,

but quick and to the point. There are finer sonnets in the English language than the two following, but there are no better sermons. And if it be said that sermons may be found in stones, but ought not to be in sonnets, I fall back upon the fact which Mr. Arnold himself so cheerfully admitted, that the middle classes, who in England, at all events, are Mr. Arnold's chief readers, are serious, and love sermons. Some day perhaps they will be content with metrical exercises, ballads, and roundels.

East London

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
"Ill and o'erwork'd, how fare you in this scene?"
"Bravely!" said he; "for I of late have been
Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread.*"

O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,

To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam—
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

The Better Part

Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!
"Christ," some one says, "was human as we are;
No judge eyes us from Heaven, our sin to scan;

"We live no more, when we have done our span."—
"Well, then, for Christ," thou answerest, "who can care?
From sin, which Heaven records not, why forbear?
Live we like brutes our life without a plan!"

So answerest thou; but why not rather say:
"Hath man no second life?—*Pitch this one high!*
Sits there no judge in Heaven, our sin to see?

"More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!
Was Christ a man like us?—*Ah! let us try*
If we then, too, can be such men as he!"

Mr. Arnold's love of nature, and poetic treatment of Nature, was to many a vexed soul a great joy and an intense relief. Mr. Arnold was a genuine Wordsworthian—being able to read everything Wordsworth ever wrote except *Vaudracour and Julia*. The influence of Wordsworth upon him was immense, but he was enabled, by the order

of his mind, to reject with the heartiest goodwill the cloudy pantheism which robs so much of Wordsworth's best verse of the heightened charm of reality, for, after all, poetry, like religion, must be true, or it is nothing. This strong aversion to the unreal also prevented Mr. Arnold, despite his love of the classical forms, from a nonsensical neo-paganism. His was a manlier attitude. He had no desire to keep tugging at the dry breasts of an outworn creed, nor any disposition to go down on his knees before plaster casts of Venus, or even of "Proteus rising from the sea." There was something very refreshing about this. In the long run even a gloomy truth is better company than a cheerful falsehood. The perpetual strain of living down to a lie, the depressing atmosphere of a circumscribed intelligence, tell upon the system, and the cheerful falsehood soon begins to look puffy and dissipated.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

For, oh! is it you, is it you,
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,
And mountains, that fill us with joy,
Or the poet who sings you so well?

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

More than the singer are these

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Yourselves and your fellows ye know not; and me,
The mateless, the one, will ye know?
Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell
Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,
My longing, my sadness, my joy?
Will ye claim for your great ones the gift
To have render'd the gleam of my skies,

To have echoed the moan of my seas,
Utter'd the voice of my hills?
When your great ones depart, will ye say:
All things have suffer'd a loss,
Nature is hid in their grave?

Race after race, man after man,
Have thought that my secret was theirs,
Have dream'd that I lived but for them,
That they were my glory and joy.
They are dust, they are changed, they are gone!
I remain.

When a poet is dead we turn to his verse with quickened feelings. He rests from his labours. We still

Stem across the sea of life by night,

and the voice, once the voice of the living, of one who stood by our side, has for a while an unfamiliar accent, coming to us as it does no longer from our friendly earth but from the strange cold caverns of death.

Joy comes and goes, hope ebbs and flows
Like the wave;
Change doth unknit the tranquil strength of men.
Love lends life a little grace,
A few sad smiles; and then,
Both are laid in one cold place,
In the grave.

Dreams dawn and fly, friends smile and die
Like spring flowers;
Our vaunted life is one long funeral.
Men dig graves with bitter tears
For their dead hopes; and all,
Mazed with doubts and sick with fears,
Count the hours.

We count the hours! These dreams of ours,
False and hollow,
Do we go hence and find they are not dead?
Joys we dimly apprehend,
Faces that smiled and fled,
Hopes born here, and born to end,
Shall we follow?

In a poem like this Mr. Arnold is seen at his best; he fairly forces himself into the very front ranks. In form almost equal to Shelley, or at any rate not so very far behind him, whilst of course in reality, in wholesome thought, in the pleasures that are afforded by thinking, it is of incomparable excellence.

We die as we do, not as we would. Yet on reading again Mr. Arnold's *Wish*, we feel that the manner of his death was much to his mind.

A Wish

I ask not that my bed of death
From bands of greedy heirs be free:
For these besiege the latest breath
Of fortune's favoured sons, not me.

I ask not each kind soul to keep
Tearless, when of my death he hears.
Let those who will, if any—weep!
There are worse plagues on earth than tears.

I ask but that my death may find
The freedom to my life denied;
Ask but the folly of mankind
Then—then at last to quit my side.

Spare me the whispering, crowded room,
The friends who come, and gape, and go;
The ceremonious air of gloom—
All which makes death a hideous show!

Nor bring, to see me cease to live,
Some doctor full of phrase and fame,
To shake his sapient head, and give
The ill he cannot cure a name.

Nor fetch, to take the accustom'd toll
Of the poor sinner bound for death,
His brother-doctor of the soul,
To canvass with official breath

The future and its viewless things—
That undiscover'd mystery
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he!

Bring none of these; but let me be
While all around in silence lies,
Moved to the window near, and see
Once more before my dying eyes,

Bathed in the sacred dews of morn,
The wide aerial landscape spread—
The world which was ere I was born,
The world which lasts when I am dead;

Which never was the friend of *one*,
Nor promised love it could not give,
But lit for all its generous sun,
And lived itself and made us live.

Then let me gaze—till I become
In soul, with what I gaze on, wed!
To feel the universe my home;
To have before my mind—instead

Of the sick room, the mortal strife,
The turmoil for a little breath—
The pure eternal course of life,
Not human combatings with death!

Thus feeling, gazing, let me grow
Composed, refresh'd, ennobled, clear—
Then willing let my spirit go
To work or wait, elsewhere or here!

To turn from Arnold's poetry to his theological writings—if so grim a name can be given to these productions—from *Rugby Chapel* to *Literature and Dogma*, from *Obermann* to *God and the Bible*, from *Empedocles on Etna* to *St. Paul and Protestantism*, is to descend from the lofty table-lands,

From the dragon-warder'd fountains
Where the springs of knowledge are,
From the watchers on the mountains
And the bright and morning star,

to the dusty highroad. It cannot, I think be

asserted that either the plan or the style of these books was in keeping with their subjects. It was characteristic of Mr. Arnold, and like his practical turn of mind, to begin *Literature and Dogma* in the *Cornhill Magazine*. A book rarely shakes off the first draft—*Literature and Dogma* never did. It is full of repetitions and wearisome recapitulations, well enough in a magazine, where each issue is sure to be read by many who will never see another number, but which disfigure a book. The style is likewise too jaunty. Bantering the Trinity is not yet a recognised English pastime. Bishop-baiting is, but this notwithstanding, most readers of *Literature and Dogma* grew tired of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol and of his alleged desire to do something for the honour of the Godhead long before Mr. Arnold showed any signs of weariness. But making all these abatements, and fully admitting that *Literature and Dogma* is not likely to prove permanently interesting to the English reader, it must be pronounced a most valuable and useful book, and one to which the professional critics and philosophers never did justice. The object of *Literature and Dogma* was no less than the restoration of the use of the Bible to the sceptical laity. It was a noble object, and it was in a great measure, as thousands of quiet people could testify, attained. It was not a philosophical treatise. In its own way it was the same kind of thing as many of Cardinal Newman's writings. It started with an assumption, namely, that it is impossible to believe in the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments. There is no laborious attempt to distinguish between one miracle and another, or to lighten the

burden of faith in any particular. Nor is any serious attempt made to disprove miracles. Mr. Arnold did not write for those who find no difficulty in believing in the first chapter of St. Luke's gospel, or the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark's, but for those who simply cannot believe a word of either the one chapter or the other. Mr. Arnold knew well that this inability to believe is apt to generate in the mind of the unbeliever an almost physical repulsion to open books which are full of supernatural events. Mr. Arnold knew this and lamented it. His own love of the Bible was genuine and intense. He could read even Jeremiah and Habakkuk. As he loved Homer with one side of him, so he loved the Bible with the other. He saw how men were crippled and maimed through growing up in ignorance of it, and living all the days of their lives outside its influence. He longed to restore it to them, to satisfy them that its place in the mind of man—that its educational and moral power—was not due to the miracles it records nor to the dogmas that Catholics have developed or Calvinists extracted from its pages, but to its literary excellence and to the glow and enthusiasm it has shed over conduct, self-sacrifice, humanity, and holy living. It was at all events a worthy object and a most courageous task. It exposed him to a heavy cross-fire. The orthodox fell upon his book and abused it, unrestrainedly abused it, for its familiar handling of their sacred books. They almost grudged Mr. Arnold his great acquaintance with the Bible, just as an Englishman might be annoyed at finding Moltke acquainted with all the roads from Dover to London. This feeling was

natural, and on the whole I think it creditable to the orthodox party that a book so needlessly paingiving as *Literature and Dogma* did not goad them into any personal abuse of its author. But they could not away with the book. Nor did the philosophical sceptic like it much better. The philosophical sceptic is too apt to hate the Bible, even as the devil was reported to hate holy water. Its spirit condemns him. Its devout, heart-stirring, noble language creates an atmosphere which is deadly for pragmatic egotism. To make men once more careful students of the Bible was to deal a blow at materialism, and consequently was not easily forgiven. "Why can't you leave the Bible alone?" they grumbled. "What have we to do with it?" But Pharisees and Sadducees do not exhaust mankind, and Mr. Arnold's contributions to the religious controversies of his time were very far from the barren things that are most contributions, and indeed most controversies on such subjects. I believe I am right when I say that he induced a very large number of persons to take up again and make a daily study of the books both of the Old and the New Testament.

As a literary critic Mr. Arnold had at one time a great vogue. His *Essays in Criticism*, first published in 1865, made him known to a larger public than his poems or his delightful *Lectures on Translating Homer* had succeeded in doing. He had the happy knack of starting interesting subjects and saying all sorts of interesting things by the way. There was the French Academy. Would it be a good thing to have an English Academy? He started the question himself and answered it in

the negative. The public took it out of his mouth and proceeded to discuss it for itself, always on the assumption that he had answered it in the affirmative. But that is the way with the public. No sensible man minds it. To set something going is the most anybody can hope to do in this world. Where it will go to, and what sort of moss it will gather as it goes, for despite the proverb there is nothing incompatible between moss and motion, no one can say. In this volume, too, he struck the note, so frequently and usefully repeated, of self-dissatisfaction. To make us dissatisfied with ourselves, alive to our own inferiority—not absolute, but in important respects; to check the chorus, then so loud, of self-approval of our majestic selves; to make us understand why nobody who is not an Englishman wants to be one—this was another of the tasks of this militant man. We all remember how *Wragg is in custody*.[1] The papers on Heine and Spinoza and Marcus Aurelius were read with eagerness, with an enjoyment, with a sense of widening horizons too rare to be easily forgotten. They were light and graceful, but it would, I think, be unjust to call them slender. They were not written for specialists or even for students, but for ordinary men and women, particularly for young men and women, who carried away with them from the reading of *Essays in Criticism* something they could not have found anywhere else, and which remained with them for the rest of their days, namely, a way of looking at things. A perfectly safe critic Mr. Arnold hardly was. Even in this volume he fusses too much about the

[1] See *Essays in Criticism*, p. 23.

De Guérins. To some later judgments of his it would be unkind to refer. It was said of the late Lord Justice Mellish by Lord Cairns that he went right instinctively. That is, he did not flounder into truth. Mr. Arnold never floundered, but he sometimes fell. A more delightful critic of literature we have not had for long. What pleasant reading are his *Lectures on Translating Homer*, which ought to be at once reprinted. How full of good things! Not perhaps fit to be torn from their contexts, or paraded in a commonplace-book, but of the kind which give a reader joy—which make literature tempting—which revive, even in dull middle-age, something of the enthusiasm of the love-stricken boy. Then, too, his *Study of Celtic Literature*. It does not matter much whether you can bring yourself to believe in the *Eisteddfod* or not. In fact Mr. Arnold did not believe in it. He knew perfectly well that better poetry is to be found every week in the poet's corner of every county newspaper in England than is produced annually at the *Eisteddfod*. You need not even share Mr. Arnold's opinion as to the inherent value of Celtic Literature, though this is of course a grave question, worthy of all consideration—but his *Study* is good enough to be read for love. It is full of charming criticism. Most critics are such savages—or, if they are not savages, they are full of fantasies, and are capable at any moment of calling *Tom Jones* dull, or Sydney Smith a bore. Mr. Arnold was not a savage, and could no more have called *Tom Jones* dull or Sydney Smith a bore, than Homer heavy or Milton vulgar. He was no gloomy specialist. He knew it took all sorts to

make a world. He was alive to life. Its great movement fascinated him, even as it had done Burke, even as it did Cardinal Newman. He watched the rushing stream, the "stir of existence," the good and the bad, the false and the true, with an interest that never flagged. In his *Last Words on Translating Homer* he says:

> And thus false tendency as well as true, vain effort as well as fruitful, go together to produce that great movement of life, to present that immense and magic spectacle of human affairs, which from boyhood to old age fascinates the gaze of every man of imagination, and which would be his terror if it were not at the same time his delight.

Mr. Arnold never succeeded in getting his countrymen to take him seriously as a practical politician. He was regarded as an unauthorised practitioner whose prescriptions no respectable chemist would consent to make up. He had not the diploma of Parliament, nor was he able, like the Secretary of an Early Closing Association, to assure any political aspirant that he commanded enough votes to turn an election. When Mr. John Morley took occasion after Mr. Arnold's death to refer to him in Parliament, the name was received respectfully but coldly. And yet he was eager about politics, and had much to say about political questions. His work in these respects was far from futile. What he said was never inept. It coloured men's thoughts, and contributed to the formation of their opinions far more than even public meetings. His introduction to his *Report on Popular Education in France*, published in 1861, is as instructive a piece of writing as is to be found in any historical disquisition of the last three decades. The paper on "My Countrymen" in that most

amusing book *Friendship's Garland* (which ought also to be at once reprinted) is full of point.

But it is time to stop. It is only possible to stop where we began. Matthew Arnold is dead. He would have been the last man to expect anyone to grow hysterical over the circumstance, and the first to denounce any strained emotion. *Il n'y a pas d'homme nécessaire.* No one ever grasped this great, this comforting, this cooling, this self-destroying truth more cordially than he did. As I write the words, I remember how he employed them in his preface to the second edition of *Essays in Criticism*, where he records a conversation, I doubt not an imaginary one, between himself and a portly jeweller from Cheapside—his fellow-traveller on the Woodford branch of the Great Eastern line. The traveller was greatly perturbed in his mind by the murder then lately perpetrated in a railway carriage by the notorious Müller. Mr. Arnold plied him with consolation. "Suppose the worst to happen," I said, "suppose even yourself to be the victim—*il n'y a pas d'homme nécessaire*—we should miss you for a day or two on the Woodford Branch, but the great mundane movement would still go on, the gravel walks of your villa would still be rolled, dividends would still be paid at the bank, omnibuses would still run, there would still be the old crush at the corner of Fenchurch Street."

And so it proves for all—for portly jewellers and lovely poets.

> The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
> Which border Ennerdale Lake,
> And Egremont sleeps by the sea—
> Nature is fresh as of old,
> Is lovely; a mortal is dead.

II

Lord Byron's antipathies were, as a rule, founded on some sound human basis, and it may well be that he was quite right for hating an author who was all author and nothing else. He could not have hated Matthew Arnold on that score, at all events, though perhaps he might have found some other ground for gratifying a feeling very dear to his heart. Mr. Arnold was many other things as well as a poet, so many other things that we need sometimes to be reminded that he was a poet. He allowed himself to be distracted in a variety of ways, he poured himself out in many strifes; though not exactly eager, he was certainly active. He discoursed on numberless themes, and was interested in many things of the kind usually called "topics."

Personally, we cannot force ourselves to bewail his agility, this leaping from bough to bough of the tree of talk and discussion. It argues an interest in things, a wide-eyed curiosity. If you find yourself in a village fair you do well to examine the booths, and when you bring your purchases home, the domestic authority will be wise not to scan too severely the trivial wares never meant to please a critical taste or to last a lifetime. Mr. Arnold certainly brought home some very queer things from his village fair, and was perhaps too fond of taking them for the texts of his occasional discourses. But others must find fault, we cannot. There is a pleasant ripple of life through Mr. Arnold's prose writings. His judgments are human judgments. He did not care for strange, out-of-the-

way things; he had no odd tastes. He drank wine, so he once said, because he liked it—good wine, that is. And it was the same with poetry and books. He liked to understand what he admired, and the longer it took him to understand anything the less disposed he was to like it. Plain things suited him best. What he hated most was the far-fetched. He had the greatest respect for Mr. Browning, and was a sincere admirer of much of his poetry, but he never made the faintest attempt to read any of the poet's later volumes. The reason probably was that he could not be bothered. Hazlitt, in a fine passage descriptive of the character of a scholar, says: "Such a one lives all his life in a dream of learning, and has never once had his sleep broken by a real sense of things." Mr. Arnold had a real sense of things. The writings of such a man could hardly fail to be interesting, whatever they might be about, even the burial of Dissenters or the cock of a nobleman's hat.

But for all that we are of those who, when we name the name of Arnold, mean neither the head-master of Rugby nor the author of *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*, but the poet who sang, not, indeed, with Wordsworth, "The wonder and bloom of the world," but a severer, still more truthful strain, a life whose secret is not joy, but peace.

Standing on this high breezy ground, we are not disposed to concede anything to the enemy, unless, indeed, it be one somewhat ill-defended outpost connected with metre. The poet's ear might have been a little nicer. Had it been so, he would have spared his readers an occasional jar and a

panegyric on Lord Byron's poetry. There are, we know, those who regard this outpost we have so lightly abandoned as the citadel. These rhyming gentry scout what Arnold called the terrible sentence passed on a French poet—*il dit tout ce qu'il veut, mais malheureusement il n'a rien à dire.* They see nothing terrible in a sentence which does but condemn them to nakedness. Thought is cumbersome. You skip best with nothing on. But the sober-minded English people are not the countrymen of Milton and Cowper, of Crabbe and Wordsworth, for nothing. They like poetry to be serious. We are fond of sermons. We may quarrel with the vicar's five-and-twenty minutes, but we let Carlyle go on for twice as many years, and until he had filled thirty-four octavo volumes.

The fact is that, though Arnold was fond of girding at the Hebrew in us, and used to quote his own Christian name with humorous resignation as only an instance of the sort of thing he had to put up with, he was a Puritan at heart, and would have been as ill at ease at a Greek festival as Newman at a Spanish *auto da fé.*

What gives Arnold's verse its especial charm is his grave and manly sincerity. He is a poet without artifice or sham. He does not pretend to find all sorts of meanings in all sorts of things. He does not manipulate the universe and present his readers with any bottled elixir. This has been cast up against him as a reproach. His poetry, so we have been told, has no consolation in it. Here is a doctor, it is said, who makes up no drugs, a poet who does not proclaim that he sees God in the avalanche or hears Him in the thunder. The world

will not, so we are assured, hang upon the lips of one who bids them not to be too sure that the winds are wailing man's secret to the complaining sea, or that nature is nothing but a theme for poets. These people may be right. In any event it is unwise to prophesy. What will be, will be. Nobody can wish to be proved wrong. It is best to be on the side of truth, whatever the truth may be. The real atheism is to say, as men are found to do, that they would sooner be convicted of error they think pleasing, than have recognised an unwelcome truth a moment earlier than its final demonstration, if, indeed, such a moment should ever arrive for souls so craven. In the meantime, this much is plain, that there is no consolation in non-coincidence with fact, and no sweetness which does not chime with experience. Therefore, those who have derived consolation from Mr. Arnold's noble verse may take comfort. Religion, after all, observes Bishop Butler in his tremendous way, is nothing if it is not true. The same may be said of the poetry of consolation.

The pleasure it is lawful to take in the truthfulness of Mr. Arnold's poetry should not be allowed to lead his lovers into the pleasant paths of exaggeration. The Muses dealt him out their gifts with a somewhat niggardly hand. He had to cultivate his Sparta. No one of his admirers can assert that in Arnold

> The force of energy is found,
> And the sense rises on the wings of sound.

He is no builder of the lofty rhyme. This he was well aware of. But neither had he any ample measure of those " winged fancies " which wander

at will through the pages of Apollo's favourite children. His strange indifference to Shelley, his severity towards Keats, his lively sense of the wantonness of Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, incline us to the belief that he was not quite sensible of the advantages of a fruitful as compared with a barren soil. His own crop took a good deal of raising, and he was perhaps somewhat disposed to regard luxuriant growths with disfavour.

But though severe and restricted, and without either grandeur or fancy, Arnold's poetry is most companionable. It never teases you—there he has the better of Shelley—or surfeits you—there he prevails over Keats. As a poet, we would never dare or wish to class him with either Shelley or Keats, but as a companion to slip in your pocket before starting to spend the day amid

> The cheerful silence of the fells,

you may search far before you find anything better than either of the two volumes of Mr. Arnold's poems.

His own enjoyment of the open air is made plain in his poetry. It is no borrowed rapture, no mere bookish man's clumsy joy in escaping from his library, but an enjoyment as hearty and honest as Izaak Walton's. He has a quick eye for things, and rests upon them with a quiet satisfaction. No need to give instances; they will occur to all. Sights and sounds alike pleased him well. So obviously genuine, so real, though so quiet, was his pleasure in our English lanes and dells, that it is still difficult to realise that his feet can no longer stir the cowslips or his ear hear the cuckoo's parting cry.

Amidst the melancholy of his verse, we detect

deep human enjoyment and an honest human endeavour to do the best he could whilst here below. The best he could do was, in our opinion, his verse, and it is a comfort amidst the wreckage of life, to believe he made the most of his gift, cultivating it wisely and well, and enriching man's life with some sober, serious, and beautiful poetry. We are, indeed, glad to notice that there is to be a new edition of Mr. Arnold's poems in one volume. It will, we are afraid, be too stout for the pocket, but most of its contents will be well worth lodgment in the head. This new edition will, we have no doubt whatever, immensely increase the number of men and women who own the charm of Arnold. The times are ripening for his poetry, which is full of foretastes of the morrow. As we read we are not carried back by the reflection, "so men once thought," but rather forward along the paths, dim and perilous it may be, but still the paths mankind is destined to tread. Truthful, sober, severe, with a capacity for deep, if placid, enjoyment of the pageant of the world, and a quick eye for its varied sights and an eager ear for its delightful sounds, Matthew Arnold is a poet whose limitations we may admit without denying his right. Our passion for him is a loyal passion for a most temperate king. There is an effort on his brow, we must admit it. It would never do to mistake his poetry for what he called the best, and which he was ever urging upon a sluggish populace. It intellectualises far too much; its method is a known method, not a magical one. But though effort may be on his brow, it is a noble effort and has had a noble result.

For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where, in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning task-work give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall.
And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labour fall
From their tired hands, and rest
Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast;
And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which they are prest,
Death in their prison reaches them
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

Or if not a slave he is a madman, sailing where he will on the wild ocean of life.

And then the tempest strikes him; and between
The lightning bursts is seen
Only a driving wreck,
And the pale master on his spar-strewn deck,
With anguish'd face and flying hair,
Grasping the rudder hard,
Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
Still standing for some false impossible shore;
And sterner comes the roar
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
And he too disappears and comes no more.

To be neither a rebel nor a slave is the burden of much of Mr. Arnold's verse—his song we cannot call it. It will be long before men cease to read their Arnold; even the rebel or the slave will occasionally find a moment for so doing, and when he does it may be written of him:

And then arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast,
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose
And the sea where it goes.

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE

1895

IT is part of the melancholy of middle age that it dooms us to witness one by one the extinguishment of the lights that cast their radiance over youth. When I was at Cambridge, in the very early seventies, the men we most discussed were Newman, Froude, Carlyle, and Ruskin—Tennyson, Browning, and Matthew Arnold. The names of Swinburne and George Meredith were indeed hotly canvassed by a few, but neither of these distinguished men was then well enough known to youngsters to allow of general conversation about their merits. To have read *The Shaving of Shagpat*, *Rhoda Fleming*, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, was to betray a curious taste, and a desire to be wise above your fellows, while Mr. Swinburne's splendid verses were at that time the badge of a coterie. So it was about the names I have mentioned the battle raged most furiously; and of them all, but one is left.[1]

Nor can it be said—death makes no difference. When a great writer whose books we read as they came forth warm from his heart goes over to the majority, he does not forthwith join the ranks of the dead but sceptred sovereigns who rule us from their urns. To those who come after him he may or may not be able to make out a title to possession of their memories; but for us the personal note,

[1] None now.

the emotion once awakened by the living voice, interferes with a cool, literary judgment. The Johnson of Boswell is known to us all; but he is not the Johnson of Bennet Langton, or Beauclerk, or Levett. A single interview, had we ever had one, with the sage in Bolt Court would put Boswell out, and to that extent destroy the purely literary impression of the world's greatest biography. The charm for us about the men I have named is that they and we were alive at the same time.

Mr. Froude's death is a personal infliction upon the Old World and the New. He had many friends, and not a few enemies, in both hemispheres. He was a strenuous man who enjoyed himself in many ways, and could adapt himself to a great variety of circumstance. With sorrow he was indeed well acquainted—he knew what it was to be both bitterly disappointed and cruelly wounded. He carried about with him in all his wanderings much sad human experience; his philosophy of life was more sombre than sweet. I do not think anybody who knew him would describe him as a happy man. But for all that he managed to enjoy himself heartily enough.

> The storm has passed away, the dripping trees are sparkling in the warm and watery sunset. Back, then, to our inn, where dinner waits for us—the choicest of our own trout, pink as salmon, with the milky curd in them, and no sauce to spoil the delicacy of their flavour. Then bed, with its lavender-scented sheets and white curtains, and sleep—sound sweet sleep that loves the country village and comes not near a London bedroom (*Short Studies*, Fourth Series, p. 351).

And his enjoyment of books, if they were the right sort, was as keen as his love of a trout-

stream. He was an old-fashioned scholar who read books for fun or to find reasons for his preconceptions, or (it may be) stones with which to pelt his enemies. The note of personal enjoyment or eager animosity runs through most of his "writings." Just before starting for South Africa he bethinks himself of what Aristotle and Goethe have said about Euripides, and how, ever since Oxford and "the statutory four plays," he had left Euripides unread, and so he slips him into a coat-pocket, and "for six weeks Euripides became an enchanter for me, and the Grecian world was raised from the dead into a moonlight visibility with softest lights, and shadows black as Erebus."

Here in foggy London he would sit the live-long day reading with unflagging zest those tremendous folios, the *Historia sui Temporis* of Thuanus, the book Johnson regretted he had never translated. Froude may have hated correcting proofs or groping among manuscripts at Hatfield, but he loved reading about men and women, and never wearied of repeopling the silent past.

For the mere hard purposes of history, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the most effective books which ever were written. We see the hall of Menelaus, we see the garden of Alcinous, we see Nausicäa among her maidens on the shore, we see the mellow monarch sitting with ivory sceptre in the market-place dealing out genial justice. Or, again, when the wild mood is on, we can hear the crash of the spears, the rattle of the armour as the heroes fall, and the plunging of the horses among the slain. Could we enter the palace of an old Ionian lord we know what we should see there; we know the words in which he would address us. We could meet Hector as a friend. If we could choose a companion to spend an evening with over a fireside, it would be the man of many counsels, the husband of Penelope (*Short Studies*, vol. i., p. 332).

With all his faults thick as autumn leaves upon

him, Froude was a great writer well equipped to play a great part. It may be his fate to stand corrected, just as it is Freeman's fate to be superseded, but he will long continue to be read—who can doubt it?—not merely for the vivacity of his too often misleading descriptions and for the masculine vigour of his style, but for the interest of his peculiar point of view, the piquancy of his philosophy, the humour of his commentary, for his quick insight into certain phases of faith and shades of character. And, when all is said and done, these things are at least as interesting as anything else. Never let us speak disrespectfully of accuracy, of research, of stern veracity, of unbiassed judgments, or lightly confer the grave title of historian upon hasty rhetoricians who have refused to take pains; but the fact remains that for the ordinary thinking man who has taken his degree, an ounce of mother-wit is often worth a pound of clergy, and that even the so-called history of an inaccurate genius may be not only more amusing but more profitable reading than the blameless work of a duller nature.

The first thing that must strike the mind of anyone who looks at Froude's writings as a whole is their amazing sameness of object, or, at all events, point of view. It is always the same nail he is hammering on the head. It reminds one of Pope's ruling passion. It crops up everywhere and at all times, firing his zeal wherever he is. What is that object? Why, to counteract what he calls "the Counter-Reformation"; to denounce monkery; to unfrock priests by stripping them of all sacramental pretensions; to topple over

everything standing between man and the Force which called him into being; to preach good works and plain homespun morality. This was Froude's work from 1849 to 1894. If only he was about this business he did not mind blundering about his facts; a misquotation or two never disturbed his night's rest. He wanted to get at men's minds, not to store their memories. Sacerdotalism, whether enthroned in the Vatican or burning borrowed candles in Lambeth, was the enemy at whose head he aimed his blows. It was for this he wrote his *History* in twelve octavo volumes. Had Henry VIII. not chanced to be the majestic lord who broke the bonds of Rome and married a wife in spite of a Pope, Froude would have left him severely alone; but Henry doing what he did, Froude put on his royal livery, and did him suit and service, striking on his behalf many a cruel and one or two unmanly blows. His excuse must be his devouring hate. With him the sermon was always more important than the text. In his secret soul we suspect Froude cared no more for Henry than Carlyle did for Frederick.

James Anthony Froude was born in Devonshire in 1818. From his two early books, *Shadows of the Clouds* (1847), and *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849), which are clearly in part autobiography, we carry away a rather disagreeable impression of his youth. His father, Archdeacon Froude, was a masterful Anglican of the old high-and-dry school, who thought doubts ill-bred and Nonconformity vulgar. The doors of his rectory were not open to free currents of opinion. He had no copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in his library. The eldest son, the brilliant

and short-lived Hurrell, took to High Churchism and the cult of the royal martyr as some boys take to drink; and having turned it into a hobby-horse, rode merrily away. The youngest son, though very impressionable to personal influences, was cast in a different mould; and from the moment when he first realised that Anglicanism was not everything, began to be uncomfortable in an atmosphere of priests, parishioners, and penny clubs. A painful struggle began, and the choice between wounding a father's feelings and choking his own thoughts had to be made. When we recall how Thomas Arnold was induced to believe it wicked to entertain a doubt as to the existence of a triune God, we need not wonder that an imperious archdeacon and a friendly bishop managed, by a judicious mixture of kicks and kisses, to wheedle a young man of vague opinions and no excessive scrupulosity of disposition into Holy orders. Froude, it is tolerably plain, never loved the Church of England. Years after Newman had left the English Episcopal Church, he was able to write with a sad sincerity: "Can I wipe out from my memory or wish to wipe out those happy Sunday mornings, light or dark, year after year, when I celebrated your communion rite in my own Church of St. Mary's, and in the pleasantness and joy of it heard nothing of the strife of tongues which surrounded its walls?" Froude entertained no such fine feelings. He had been kidnapped into the ministry. When the time came to regain his freedom, he leapt for joy. "My living is resigned, my employment gone. I am again free, again happy; and all the poor and paltry network in

which I was entangled, the weak intrigues which, like the flies in summer, irritate far worse than more serious evils—I have escaped them all. . . . All I really grieve for is my father" (*The Nemesis of Faith*, p. 76).

It is certainly difficult to discover in Froude's writings any traces of departed fervour or unction; and yet if he never had any, how are we to account for his close relations with Newman, and his share, such as it was, in the *Lives of the Saints*?

In the earlier of the two sketches which make up the little book *Shadows of the Clouds*, which was published annonymously in 1847, and gave great annoyance to the archdeacon, Froude boldly deals with the subject of the *Lives of the Saints*:

> I thought you knew me too well to be surprised at my taking to the *Lives of the Saints*, taking to anything that offered itself. You know I affect to be a philosopher, who does not believe that Truth ever shows herself completely in either of the rival armies that claim so loudly to be her champions. She seems to me to lie like the tongue of the balance, only kept in the centre by the equipoise of contending forces, or, rather, if I may use a better illustration, like a boat in a canal drawn forward by a rope from both sides; which appear as if they would negative each other, and yet produce only a uniform straightforward motion. I throw myself on this side or on that, as I please, without fear of injuring her. The thought of the great world sweeps on its own great road, but it is its own road; quite an independent one, not in the least resembling that which Catholic or Protestant, Roundhead or Cavalier, have carved out for it.

This is not a very pious passage, and I find it impossible to believe that Froude's Neo-Catholicism was ever more than a piece of eclecticism, a boyish tribute to Newman, whose voice never ceased to echo through the chambers of his old disciple's memory. A visit to Ireland, paid just

after his degree, introduced Froude for the first time in his life to Evangelicalism, as it was called; that Evangelicalism for which, so Newman tells us in his *Apologia*, he had learned to entertain a profound contempt, but which affected his young associate very differently. In Ireland Froude met men "who had gone through as many, as various, and as subtle Christian experiences as the most developed saint in the Catholic calendar. I saw it in their sermons, in their hymns, in their conversation." He tells us of a clergyman, afterwards a bishop in the Irish Church, who declared in his hearing that the theory of a Christian priesthood was a fiction; that the notion of the Sacraments, as having a mechanical efficacy, irrespective of their conscious effect upon the mind of the receiver, was an idolatrous superstition; that the Church was a human institution; that it might have bishops in England, and dispense with bishops in Scotland and Germany; that a bishop was merely an officer; that the apostolical succession was probably false as a fact, and if a fact, implied nothing but historical continuity. Froude listened to these blasphemies without terror, and returned to Oxford to take up his residence as a Fellow, convinced at least of this, that a holy life was no monopoly of the sacramental theory. It was now a mere question of time when Froude should run off the Catholic rails. He read Carlyle's *French Revolution*, and contrasted the Scottish author with the Oxford one. "For the first time now it was brought home to me that two men may be as sincere, as faithful, as uncompromising, and yet hold opinions far asunder as the poles. I have

before said that I think the moment of this conviction is the most perilous crisis of our lives; for myself it threw me at once on my own responsibility, obliged me to look for myself at what men said, instead of simply accepting all because they said it" (*The Nemesis of Faith*, p. 156).

There is something childish, almost despicable, in the system of education which in the case of so clever a man as Froude postponed this discovery so long. Before many days were over J. A. Froude was a heretic. What faith was he now to pursue? Positive theological opinions were evidently out of his beat. He might admire his Irish friends and their beauty of holiness, but the Evangelical doctrine of the Atonement would have proved as much a stumbling-block as the miracle of the Mass. Froude's historical imagination came to his assistance. A Devonshire man, he was English to the core, and having quarrelled with priests and popes, his thoughts turned to the great discomfiture which befell priests and popes at the Reformation. He very quickly grew excited. He had early perceived that the object of the Oxford tract writers was to unprotestantise England—to make John Bull once more a Catholic, full of reverence for saints and shrines and priests and mysteries; or, as he says in *The Nemesis of Faith*, p. 151, "to make England cease to produce great men, as we count greatness—and for poetry, courage, daring enterprise, resolution, and broad honest understanding, substitute devotion, endurance, humility, self-denial, sanctity and faith." This is to put the case fairly enough, and thenceforward Froude was before everything else a Protestant, preaching a broad

Protestant John Bullism as opposed to Catholic piety and submission. Theology, properly so called, he abandoned, though as he grew older and became more conservative he discouraged free thought, and regretted the days when plain people took their creed from their parson just as they did their meat from their butcher, with only a very occasional threat of changing their custom. In scientific research and the origin of species he simply took no interest whatever. He would have us believe that his faith in the Judge of all the earth was unwavering, but his readers will find it hard to recall to mind any passage which even approaches the tone or temper of devotional religion. Certainly, on the whole Froude's antipathies seem stronger than his affections.

Once rid of his orders and deprived of his fellowship, Froude naturally turned to literature, and to literature on its historical side. He had from the first a passion for expressing himself forcibly and clearly. "Oh, how I wish I could write! I try sometimes; for I seem to feel myself overflowing with thoughts, and I cry out to be relieved of them. But it is so stiff and miserable when I get anything done. What seemed so clear and liquid comes out so thick, stupid, and frost-bitten, that I myself, who put the idea there, can hardly find it for shame if I go look for it a few days after." The man who could write thus was bound ultimately to succeed; and by dint of taking pains Froude obtained the mastery of his pen, and for the last forty years of his life was a great though very careless artist in words.

The growing devotion to Carlyle was a little

puzzling, and in the opinion of some keen though unfriendly critics, who had good opportunities of judging, not wholly free from affectation. His talk of "the piety of Oliver and the grandeur of Calvin" does not carry conviction with it. It was Carlyle's humour to fancy himself a Puritan, and he perhaps was one to this extent, that he would not allow anyone but himself a tirade against "old Jews' clothes"; but how did Froude squeeze himself into that galley?

The true Froude, that is, the Froude apart from his animosities and pet foes, is to be found in such passages as these:

> We should draw no horoscopes; we should expect little, for what we expect will not come to pass. Revolutions, reformations—those vast movements into which heroes and saints have flung themselves, in the belief that they were the dawn of the millennium—have not borne the fruit which they looked for. Millenniums are still far away. These great convulsions leave the world changed, perhaps improved, but not improved as the actors in them hoped it would be. Luther would have gone to work with less heart could he have foreseen the Thirty Years' War, and in the distance the theology of Tübingen. Washington might have hesitated to draw the sword against England could he have seen the country which he made, as we see it now (February, 1864; *Short Studies*, vol. i., p. 28).
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> The mythic element cannot be eliminated out of history. Men who play leading parts on the world's stage gather about them the admiration of friends and the animosity of disappointed rivals or political enemies. The atmosphere becomes charged with legends of what they have said or done —some inventions, some distortions of facts, but rarely or never accurate. Their outward acts, being public, cannot be absolutely misstated; their motives, being known only to themselves, are an open field for imagination; and as the disposition is to believe evil rather than good, the portraits drawn may vary indefinitely, according to the sympathies of the describer, but are seldom too favourable. The more distinguished a man is the more he is talked about. Stories are current about him in his own lifetime, guaranteed apparently by the highest authorities; related, insisted upon;

time, place, and circumstance accurately given—most of them mere malicious lies; yet, if written down to reappear in memoirs a hundred years hence, they are likely to pass for authentic, or, at least, probable. Even where there is no malice, imagination will still be active.

People believe or disbelieve, repeat or suppress, according to their own inclinations; and death, which ends the feuds of unimportant persons, lets loose the tongues over the characters of the great. Kings are especially sufferers; when alive they hear only flattery; when they are gone men revenge themselves by drawing hideous portraits of them; and the more distinguished they may have been, the more minutely their weaknesses are dwelt upon. "C'est un plaisir indicible," says Voltaire, "de donner des décrets contre des souverains morts quand on ne peut en lancer contre eulx de leur vivant de peur de perdre ses oreilles." The dead sovereigns go their way. Their real work for good or evil lives after them, but they themselves are where the opinions expressed about their character affect them no more. To Cæsar or Napoleon it matters nothing what judgment the world passes upon their conduct. It is of more importance for the ethical value of history that acts which as they are related appear wicked should be duly condemned, that acts which are represented as having advanced the welfare of mankind should be duly honoured, than that the real character of individuals should be correctly appreciated.

To appreciate any single man with complete accuracy is impossible. To appreciate him even proximately is extremely difficult. Rulers of kingdoms may have public reasons for what they do, which at the time may be understood or allowed for. Times change, and new interests rise. The circumstances no longer exist which would explain their conduct. The student looks, therefore, for an explanation in elements, which he thinks he understands—in pride, ambition, fear, avarice, jealousy, or sensuality; and settling the question thus to his own satisfaction, resents or ridicules attempts to look for other motives. So long as his moral judgment is generally correct, he inflicts no injury, and he suffers none. Cruelty and lust are proper objects of abhorrence; he learns to detest them in studying the Tiberius of Tacitus, though the character described by the great Roman historian may have been a mere creation of the hatred of the old Roman aristocracy. The manifesto of the Prince of Orange was a libel against Philip the Second; but the Philip of Protestant tradition is an embodiment of the persecuting spirit of Catholic Europe, which it would be now useless to disturb.

The tendency of history is to fall into wholesome moral lines, whether they be accurate or not, and to interfere with

harmless illusions may cause greater errors than it aspires to cure. Crowned offenders are arraigned at the tribunal of history for the crimes which they are alleged to have committed. It may be sometimes shown that the crimes were not crimes at all, that the sufferers had deserved their fate, that the severities were useful and essential for some great and valuable purpose. But the reader sees in the apology for acts which he had regarded as tyrannical a defence of tyranny itself. Preoccupied with the received interpretation, he finds deeds excused which he had learnt to execrate; *and in learning something which, even if true, is of no real moment to him, he suffers in the maiming of his perceptions of the difference between right and wrong.* The white-washing of the villains of tradition is, therefore, justly regarded as waste of labour. If successful, it is of imperfect value; if unsuccessful, it is a misuse of industry which deserves to be censured. Time is too precious to be squandered over paradoxes. The dead are gone; the censure of mankind has written their epitaphs, and so they may be left. Their true award will be decided elsewhere (*The Divorce of Catharine of Arragon*).

The last book of his is his *Erasmus*—lectures delivered at Oxford from the chair to which he was appointed on the death of his bitter critic, Freeman, by Lord Salisbury, one of those very Neo-Catholics Froude so heartily abhorred. Froude felt no obligations to his patron, and with the shades of the prison-house gathering round him, set to work at his old task with all his old vigour. He took as his text the letters of Erasmus, and selecting from them those passages which most interested him as he read them, translated them from the Latin into racy English, passing upon them as he went along his familiar commentary. The result is a most fascinating volume. Erasmus seems alive once more. Whether Froude's Erasmus is the true Erasmus is, of course, matter of controversy. All Mr. Froude would ever have said is, "It is my notion of Erasmus. What is *yours*?" Good history or bad, it is a blow in the face of

Neo-Catholicism, and perhaps that is all Mr. Froude ever meant it to be.

Personal controversy Mr. Froude avoided. He seldom replied to his maddened foes. He made no great pretensions, and held himself aloof from professional authorism. He enjoyed country life and country pursuits, and the society of cultivated women. He has gone from us, leaving the fight in which he took so fierce a part still raging and unsettled. The ranks are closing up, and his old place already knows him no more.

WALTER BAGEHOT

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT LEIGHTON HOUSE, MARCH 5TH, 1901

AT the very outset it is proper I should state I never saw Mr. Bagehot. I know him, if I do know him, through his books alone. There are in this room those who knew and loved the living man. His modes of speech, his manners and customs, his ways and habits, how he talked and laughed and held his peace, how he entered a room, how he sat at meat—all the countless pleasant things, the admirable strengths, the agreeable weaknesses that went to make up his personality, they know, and I do not. What a warning to be silent! To put myself even for a few minutes in competition with such memories, such knowledge, seems ridiculous, and yet perhaps it is not so very ridiculous after all. Unless an English author has had his portrait painted by Reynolds or his life written by Boswell, he has small chance of being remembered (apart from the recollections of a small and ever-dwindling group of friends), save by his books. They are, indeed, his only chance. I do not say it is a good chance. I have fallen asleep over too many books to say that. What I do say is, it is his only chance.

You can know a man from his books, and if he is a writer of good faith and has the knack, you may know him very well; better it well may be than

did his co-directors or his partners in business, or, even—for I am here to tell the truth—his own flesh and blood. It is easier for an author to take in his brother than a really astute well-seasoned reader. I am not disposed to think overmuch of the insight of relations. Joseph Bonaparte has left on record his opinion of his famous brother. "He was," so said this sapient though not hereditary monarch—"he was not so much what I should call a great, as a good man."

It is amazing what things your confirmed author will say in print. The shyest of men when under the literary impulse will tear down the veils behind which men are usually only too well content to live. Mr. Bagehot has himself said in his own picturesque way, "We all come down to dinner, but each has a room to himself." In his books an author will often take you into this solitary chamber.

I have enjoyed on rare occasions the conversation of two distinguished poets, Mr. Browning and Mr. Arnold. To both I felt myself under a huge personal obligation. I longed to hear them even distantly approach the subject-matter of *Christmas Eve* or *Rugby Chapel*; they never did in my hearing. "Hardly," says Browning, "will a man tell his joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, beliefs and unbelievings." No! a man will not *tell* these things, but if he is a true author he will *print* them.

However, everyone who has read Mr. Bagehot's books will agree at once that he is an author who can be known from his books.

I suppose the only classification of authors of

first-rate importance is into good authors and bad ones—a literary, not a moral distinction. But other classifications have their use. There are, for example, personal authors and impersonal ones. A personal author is not necessarily one who babbles to his readers about himself and his belongings, his likes and dislikes, but he is one whose spirit hovers and broods over his own page; with whose treatise is bound up a living thing. Take an author about whom Mr. Bagehot has written with deep feeling and great acumen, the sombre spirit who composed *The Analogy of Religion* and preached the *Fifteen Sermons*. As Mr. Bagehot has observed, there is no positive direct evidence that Bishop Butler ever spoke to anybody all his life through, except on two occasions to Queen Caroline.[1] You cannot guess what books he had in his library, for he hardly ever makes a quotation. "No man," says Mr. Bagehot, "would ever guess from Butler's writings that he ever had the disposal of five pounds. It is odd to think what he did with the mining profits and landed property, the royalties and rectories, coal-dues and curacies, that he must have heard of from morning to night." And yet this reticence and deep shadow of seclusiveness has not availed to hide from the sympathetic reader—despite, too, the clouded difficult style; for, again to quote Bagehot, "Butler, so far from having the pleasures of eloquence, had not even the comfort of perspicuity"—a strong, permanent, personal impression of an entirely honest

[1] I am not sure that Mr. Bagehot ever made this observation. If he did it is not quite accurate, for in the *Dictionary of National Biography* the Bishop has at least three remarks attributed to him.

thinker. I feel far more certain that I know what manner of man Butler was, than I do about Saint Augustine, for all his fine *Confessions*.

Mr. Bagehot was a personal author, though he tells us very little directly about himself.

Now, I am going to begin quoting in real earnest.

In the year 1853 Bagehot, who was then twenty-seven years of age, had the courage, for his was a dauntless spirit, to write an essay on Shakespeare; not on his plays, nor on his characters, nor on his sonnets, nor on his investments, but on himself —on Shakespeare. To be able to write a good essay on Shakespeare is in my opinion the best possible test of an English man of letters. Had we an Academy and an examination for admission, no other demand need be made. But who should be the examiners?

Mr. Bagehot began his essay by boldly asserting that it is quite possible to know Shakespeare, and then proceeds:

> Some extreme sceptics, we know, doubt if it is possible to deduce anything as to an author's character from his works. Yet surely people do not keep a tame steam-engine to write their books, and if these books were really written by a man, he must have been a man who could write them; he must have had the thoughts which they express, have acquired the knowledge they contain, have possessed the style in which we read them. The difficulty is a defect of the critics. A person who knows nothing of an author he has read will not know much of an author he has seen.
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> First of all, it may be said that Shakespeare's works could only be produced by a first-rate imagination working on a first-rate experience. It is often difficult to make out whether the author of a poetic creation is drawing from fancy or drawing from experience; but for art on a certain scale the two must concur. Out of nothing nothing can be created. Some plastic power is required, however great may be the material. And when such a work as *Hamlet* or *Othello*, still more when both of them and others not unequal have been

created by a single mind, it may be fairly said that not only a great imagination, but a full conversancy with the world, was necessary to their production. The whole powers of man under the most favourable circumstances are not too great for such an effort. We may assume that Shakespeare had a great experience.

To a great experience one thing is essential, an experiencing nature. It is not enough to have opportunity, it is essential to feel it. Some occasions come to all men; but to many they are of little use, and to some they are none. What, for example, has experience done for the distinguished Frenchman, the name of whose essay is prefixed to this paper? M. Guizot is the same man that he was in 1820, or, we believe, as he was in 1814. Take up one of his lectures, published before he was a practical statesman; you will be struck with the width of view, the amplitude and the solidity of the reflections; you will be amazed that a mere literary teacher could produce anything so wise. But take up afterwards an essay published since his fall, and you will be amazed to find no more. Napoleon the First is come and gone, the Bourbons of the old regime have come and gone, the Bourbons of the new regime have had their turn. M. Guizot has been first minister of a citizen king; he has led a great party; he has pronounced many a great *discours* that was well received by the second elective assembly in the world. But there is no trace of this in his writings. No one would guess from them that their author had ever left the professor's chair. It is the same, we are told, with small matters; when M. Guizot walks the street he seems to see nothing; the head is thrown back, the eye fixed, and the mouth working. His mind is no doubt at work, but it is not stirred by what is external. Perhaps it is the internal activity of mind that overmasters the perceptive power. Anyhow, there might have been an *émeute* in the street and he would not have known it; there have been revolutions in his life, and he is scarcely the wiser. Among the most frivolous and fickle of civilised nations he is alone. They pass from the game of war to the game of peace, from the game of science to the game of art, from the game of liberty to the game of slavery, from the game of slavery to the game of licence. He stands like a schoolmaster in the playground, without sport and without pleasure, firm and sullen, slow and awful (*Literary Studies*, vol. i., pp. 126–128).

From this quotation we take away the notion of an *experiencing nature*. Shakespeare had what Guizot (it appears) had not, an experiencing nature.

I will now take up Bagehot's essay on Macaulay,

written in 1856, when the great *History* was volume by volume taking the town by storm. It is easier to write well about Macaulay than about Shakespeare, but perhaps it is not so very easy, though it is no longer personally dangerous. I need not premise that Bagehot had an enormous admiration for Macaulay, who supplied him with what a few men love better than their dinner, *intellectual entertainment.* But Bagehot was a critic, and he writes:

> Macaulay has exhibited many high attainments, many dazzling talents, much singular and well-trained power; but the quality which would most strike the observers of the interior man is what may be called his *in*experiencing nature. Men of genius are in general distinguished by their extreme susceptibility to external experience. Finer and softer than other men, every exertion of their will, every incident of their lives, influences them more deeply than it would others. Their essence is at once finer and more impressible; it receives a distincter mark, and receives it more easily than the souls of the herd. From a peculiar sensibility the man of genius bears the stamp of life commonly more clearly than his fellows; even casual associations make a deep impression on him: examine his mind, and you may discern his fortunes. Macaulay has nothing of this. You could not tell what he has been. His mind shows no trace of change. What he is, he was; and what he was, he is. He early attained a high development, but he has not increased it since; years have come, but they have whispered little; as was said of the second Pitt, "He never grew, he was cast." The volume of speeches which he has published place the proof of this in every man's hand. His first speeches are as good as his last, his last scarcely richer than his first. He came into public life at an exciting season; he shared of course in that excitement, and the same excitement still quivers in his mind. He delivered marvellous rhetorical exercises on the Reform Bill when it passed; he speaks of it with rhetorical interest even now. He is still the man of '32. From that era he looks on the past. . . .
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> All this was very natural at the moment. Nothing could be more probable than that a young man of the greatest talents, entering at once into important life at a conspicuous opportunity, should exaggerate its importance; he would fancy it was the "crowning achievement," the greatest "in

the tide of time." But the singularity is that he should retain the idea now; that years have brought no influence, experience no change. The events of twenty years have been full of rich instruction on the events of twenty years ago, but they have not instructed him. His creed is a fixture. It is the same on his peculiar topic—on India. Before he went there he made a speech on the subject; Lord Canterbury, who must have heard a million speeches, said it was the best he had ever heard. It is difficult to fancy that so much vivid knowledge could be gained from books, from horrible Indian treatises, that such imaginative mastery should be possible without actual experience. Not forgetting, or excepting, the orations of Burke, it was perhaps as remarkable a speech as was ever made on India by an Englishman who had not been in India. Now he has been there he speaks no better, rather worse; he spoke excellently without experience, he speaks no better with it; if anything, it rather puts him out. His speech on the Indian charter a year or two ago was not finer than that on the charter of 1833. Before he went to India he recommended that writers should be examined in the classics; after being in India he recommended that they should be examined in the same way. He did not say that he had seen the place in the meantime; he did not think that had anything to do with it. You could never tell from any difference in his style what he had seen, or what he had not seen. He is so insensible to passing objects that they leave no distinctive mark, no intimate peculiar trace.

Such a man would naturally think literature more instructive than life. Hazlitt said of Mackintosh, "He might like to read an *account* of India; but India itself, with its burning, shining face, was a mere blank, an endless waste to him. Persons of this class have no more to say to a plain matter of fact staring them in the face, than they have to say to a *hippopotamus*." This was a keen criticism on Sir James, savouring of the splenetic mind from which it came. As a complete estimate it would be a most unjust one of Macaulay, but we know that there is a whole class of minds which prefers the literary delineation of objects to the actual eyesight of them (*Literary Studies*, vol. ii., pp. 224–226).

I do not stop to ask whether we ought to agree with this criticism or not, for I have only made use of it to emphasise my earlier quotations, and to make plainer what I mean when, borrowing, as I am now able to do, Bagehot's own words, I say of him, that he most surely had an *experiencing*

nature, and impressed the stamp of life on everything he wrote.

This is the reason why Mr. Bagehot is so great a favourite with literary men. Most authors who write books in their libraries cherish at the bottom of their hearts, if not a dislike, at least a gloomy suspicion, of books and bookishness; they hanker after life—after the hippopotamus. I once took a very considerable author into a police-court; I thought it might chance to amuse him. He stood entranced whilst some poor ragamuffin's misdemeanours and improprieties were brought home to him, a short sentence passed, and the prisoner led away to a too familiar doom. Then we went out, and no sooner were we in the street than my author smote his staff upon the pavement and bitterly bewailed the hard fate that had prevented his being called to the Bar and becoming a "Beak." I gently reminded him of his books, quite a comely row upon the shelf. "Hang my books!" he cried, waving his stick in the direction of the magistrate's chair. "When that fellow sends a poor devil to prison for six weeks, to prison he goes; but when I publish a book, *nothing happens*."

Mr. Bagehot's books are full of actuality. His pages are so animated that something seems to happen in almost every one of them. The hippopotamus sticks out his head, as does the ox with that wonderful wet nose in the foreground of Rubens's *Nativity* in the Antwerp Gallery.

The reason why so few good books are written is that so few people who can write know anything. In general, an author has always lived in a room, has read books, has cultivated science, is acquainted with the style and sentiments

of the best authors, but he is out of the way of employing his own eyes and ears. He has nothing to hear and nothing to see; his life is a vacuum. The mental habits of Robert Southey, which about a year ago were so extensively praised in the public journals, is the type of literary existence, just as the praise bestowed on it shows the admiration excited by it among literary people. He wrote poetry (as if anybody could) before breakfast; he read during breakfast; he wrote history until dinner; he corrected proof-sheets between dinner and tea; he wrote an essay for the *Quarterly* afterwards, and after supper, by way of relaxation, composed *The Doctor*, a lengthy and elaborate jest. Now, what can anyone think of such a life, except how clearly it shows that the habits best fitted for communicating information, formed with the best care and daily regulated by the best motives, are exactly the habits which are likely to afford a man the least information to communicate? Southey had no events, no experiences. His wife kept house and allowed him pocket-money, just as if he had been a German professor devoted to accents, tobacco, and the dates of Horace's amours. And it is pitiable to think that so meritorious a life was only made endurable by a painful delusion. He thought that day by day and hour by hour he was accumulating stores for the instruction and entertainment of a long posterity. His epics were to be in the hands of all men, and his history of Brazil the "Herodotus of the South American Republics." As if his epics were not already dead, and as if the people who now cheat at Valparaiso care a *real* who it was that cheated those before them! Yet it was only by a conviction like this that an industrious and calligraphic man (for such was Robert Southey), who might have earned money as a clerk, worked all his days for half a clerk's wages at occupation much duller and more laborious (*Literary Studies*, vol. i., p. 137).

But not only is Mr. Bagehot a great favourite with those dignified beings who write books at their leisure in the library, but his works are invariably to be found on the tables of editors, journalists, reviewers—the whole fraternity of ready writers, and this for another set of reasons. He is one of those extraordinary men whose remarks are made for the first time. Most of our sayings have been hacked about long before they get into print; an air of staleness clings to them.

True it is there is always somebody—may God bless him!—in every audience who may be relied upon never to have heard anything, but for all that, originality is a great quality. Nor does it stop quite there. Mr. Bagehot is not only an original writer, but he presents you with his thoughts and fancies in an unworked state. He is not an artist; he does not stop to elaborate and dress up his material; but having said something which is worth saying and has not been said before, this strange writer is content to pass hurriedly on to say something else. There is more meat on Mr. Bagehot's bones for the critics than on almost anybody else's; hence his extreme utility to the nimble-witted and light-hearted gentry aforementioned. Bagehot crops up all over the country. His mind is lent out; his thoughts toss on all waters; his brew, mixed with a humbler element, may be tapped everywhere; he has made a hundred small reputations. Nothing would have pleased him better; his fate would have jumped with his ironical humour.

Thus far we have found Mr. Bagehot to possess an experiencing nature, the stamp of life, a *vivida vis* of description, and an observation of mankind, not from the study window or from a club window, but from places where real business is done.

Mr. Bagehot was a mathematician, a moral philosopher, a political economist, a trained, though not a practising, lawyer, a banker, a shipowner, and from 1860 till his too early death in 1877 the editor and manager of the *Economist*. In addition to all this, he was a reader and critic of books.

One of his best known works is a description of the money market he characteristically called *Lombard Street*, because, says he, "I wish to deal and to show that I mean to deal with concrete realities." The bank-rate was no more of a mystery to him than is the Cabinet to Lord Salisbury; he was quite at home with Foreign Exchanges; he writes as familiarly about the direful suspension of Overend and Gurney as any of you might do about the French Revolution, or the Renaissance, or the Greek drama; he had mastered the niceties of Conveyancing in the chambers of Sir Charles Hall, and the mysteries of Special Pleading in those of Mr. Justice Quain; and no sooner had he mastered these niceties and mysteries than they were all abolished by Acts of Parliament. Attorneys, he somewhere remarks, are for the world, and the world is for attorneys. The prowling faculties, he thinks, will have their way. In many of his moods Mr. Bagehot was certainly a most mundane person; he had no fine Lucretian contempt for the thousand and one laborious nothings men nickname duties, or for the pursuits of the average man. I cannot say he revered business as did that delightful Mr. Garth in *Middlemarch*, for reverence was a plant of slow growth in Mr. Bagehot's breast; but he always speaks of it, as of all the other concerns of Englishmen, including the House of Lords, with respect tempered by amusement.

The hum of affairs sounds through all his writings. How best is business to be transacted here on this planet, in this country, and to-day? You may know men by their favourite quotations, and a

prime favourite with Bagehot is Bishop Butler's "To such a being as man, in such a world as the present." His famous book on the Constitution, though it may require bringing down to date—for the British Constitution has not stood still during the quarter of a century that has slipped away since Mr. Bagehot's lamented death—is full of his characteristics, his lively insight into the actual workings of political machinery, his sense both of the imperfections and of the importance of a working machine, of the advantage of accustoming people to go on doing the same thing in the same way, not because it is the best of all possible ways—*that* it never is—but because "to such a being as man, in such a world as this," a habit and a rule are of the utmost importance.

In all this Mr. Bagehot is mundane—very mundane. He has been called cynical, and if I knew what that word means in our modern usage, I might agree that cynical he was.

But he had another side.

Mr. R. H. Hutton, Mr. Bagehot's great ally, and custodian of his fame, wrote the life of his friend that appears in the second volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, a splendid series of volumes that has struck a blow at one of our oldest native industries—that of the miscellaneous writer, who, until the completion of this publication, could always turn an honest penny by collecting stray information, from this quarter and from that, about more or less obscure notabilities in our history, and printing it in a magazine, and afterwards, it may be, including it with other trifles in a neat little volume destined to flutter

its hour. These great combinations are fatal to the small trader. In the course of this short memoir, Mr. Hutton refers to Mr. Bagehot's obligations to his early friends and teachers—Dr. Prichard, Professor de Morgan, and that fine scholar and stoic Mr. George Long. Their influence, of course, I have no means of tracing. Influences are subtle things, and even in one's own case

> Who can point as with a wand,
> And say this portion of the river of my mind
> Came from that fountain?

There are, however, two men whose influence over Mr. Bagehot's powerful and original mind was all-pervading—Wordsworth and Newman. He did not become a disciple of either; his was not a disciple's mind. He paid these two great writers a truer compliment than he would have done had he sunk his individuality into theirs, for he allowed their individualities to colour and temper his own.

I will give an example of the Wordsworth influence. Mr. Bagehot wrote an essay on *The First Edinburgh Reviewers*. He is sympathetic. There was a good deal of the old Whig about him. He occupies some thirteen pages in friendly description of Lord Jeffrey and his friends—"men," so he writes, "of a cool, moderate, resolute firmness, not gifted with high imagination, little prone to enthusiastic sentiment, heedless of large theories and speculations, careless of dreamy scepticism, with a clear view of the next step, and a wise intention to take it, a strong conviction that the elements of knowledge are true, and a steady belief that the present world can and should be quietly improved."

What nice people! I hope there are a great many of them in the new London County Council.

But after thirteen pages in praise of the Whigs, Mr. Bagehot grows restive. The sympathetic reader hears afar off the roar of the distant breakers; the tide of the reaction has set in, for, so it appears, the Whigs hated mysticism. Yes, says Mr. Bagehot:

> A clear, precise, discriminating intellect shrinks at once from the symbolic, the unbounded, the indefinite. *The misfortune is that mysticism is true.* There certainly are kinds of truth, borne in, as it were, instinctively on the human intellect, most influential on the character and the heart, yet hardly capable of stringent statement, difficult to limit by an elaborate definition. Their course is shadowy; the mind seems rather to have seen than to see them, more to feel after than definitely apprehend them. They commonly involve an infinite element which, of course, cannot be stated precisely, or else a first principle — an original tendency — of our intellectual constitution, which it is impossible not to feel, and yet which it is hard to extricate in terms and words. Of this latter kind is what has been called the religion of nature, or more exactly, perhaps, the religion of the imagination. This is an interpretation of the world. According to it the beauty of the universe has a meaning, its grandeur a soul, its sublimity an expression. As we gaze on the faces of those whom we love . . . as a charm and a thrill seem to run along the tone of a voice, to haunt the mind with a mere word; so in nature the mystical sense finds a motion in the mountain, and a power in the waves, and a meaning in the long white line of the shore, and a thought in the blue of heaven, an unbounded being in the vast, void air, and
>
> "Wakeful watchings in the pointed stars."
>
> There is a philosophy in this which might be explained, if explaining were to our purpose. But be this as it may, it is certain that Mr. Wordsworth preached this kind of religion and that Lord Jeffrey did not believe a word of it. His cool, sharp, collected mind revolted from its mysticism; his detective intelligence was absorbed in its apparent fallaciousness; his light humour made sport with the sublimities of the preacher; his love of perspicuity was vexed by its indefiniteness; the precise philosopher was amazed at its mystic unintelligibility. Yet we do not mean that in this

great literary feud either of the combatants had all the right or gained all the victory. The world has given judgment. Both Mr. Wordsworth and Lord Jeffrey have received their reward. The one had his own generation, the laughter of men, the applause of drawing-rooms, the concurrence of the crowd; the other a succeeding age, the fond enthusiasm of secret students, the lonely rapture of lonely minds. And each has received according to his kind. If all cultivated men speak differently because of the existence of Wordsworth and Coleridge, if not a thoughtful English book has appeared for forty years without some trace for good or evil of their influence, if sermon-writers subsist upon their thoughts, if "sacred poets" thrive by translating their weaker portion into the speech of women, if, when all this is over, some sufficient part of their writing will ever be fitting food for wild musing and solitary meditation, surely this is because they possessed the inner nature—"an intense and glowing mind," "the vision and the faculty divine." But if, perchance, in their weaker moments the great authors of the *Lyrical Ballads* did ever imagine that the world was to pause because of their verses, that *Peter Bell* would be popular in drawing-rooms, that *Christabel* would be perused in the City, that people of fashion would make a handbook of *The Excursion*, it was well for them to be told at once that this was not so. Nature ingeniously prepared a shrill, artificial voice, which spoke in season and out of season, enough, and more than enough, what will ever be the idea of the cities of the plain concerning those who live alone among the mountains; of the frivolous concerning the grave; of the gregarious concerning the recluse; of those who laugh concerning those who laugh not; of the common concerning the uncommon; of those who lend on usury concerning those who lend not; the notion of the world of those whom it will not reckon among the righteous. It said, "This won't do!" And so in all time will the lovers of polished Liberalism speak concerning the intense and lonely prophet (*Literary Studies*, vol. i., pp. 26).

As for Newman, Mr. Bagehot must have had the *Parochial Sermons* by heart. Two of the most famous, entitled *The Invisible World* and *The Greatness and Littleness of Human Life*, seem to have become incorporate with Mr. Bagehot's innermost nature. They are not obviously congruous with his pursuits. What have bankers to do with the invisible world? One has heard of

the Divine Economy, but that is something different from the *Economist.* However, there these sermons are, underneath his mundaneness, his humorous treatment of things, his aloofness from all ecclesiasticisms. He wrote about Lombard Street like a lover, about the British Constitution like a polished Member of Parliament, about the gaiety of Sir John Falstaff like a humorist. "If," says he, "most men were to save up all the gaiety of their whole lives, it would come about to the gaiety of one speech of Falstaff." There's a banker's balance for you! But amidst it all, ever and anon

> From the soul's subterranean depths upborne,
> As from an infinitely distant land,
> Come airs and floating echoes

of *The Invisible World* and *The Greatness and Littleness of Human Life.*

For example, all of a sudden in the middle of an article on that most charming, touching, sincere poet Béranger, we come upon this:

> This shrewd sense gives a solidity to the verses of Béranger which the social and amusing sort of poetry commonly wants, but nothing can redeem it from the reproach of wanting *back* thought. This is inevitable in such literature; as it professes to delineate for us the light essence of a fugitive world, it cannot be expected to dwell on those deep and eternal principles on which that world is based. It ignores them, as light talk ignores them. The most opposite thing to the poetry of Society is the poetry of inspiration. There exists, of course, a kind of imagination which detects the secrets of the universe —which fills us sometimes with dread, sometimes with hope —which awakens the soul, which makes pure the feelings, which explains Nature, reveals what is above Nature, chastens "the deep heart of man." Our senses teach us what the world is, our intuitions where it is. We see the blue and gold of the world, its lively amusements, its gorgeous if superficial splendour, its currents of men; we feel its light spirits, we enjoy its happiness; we enjoy it, and we are puzzled. What

is the object of all this? Why do we do all this? What is the universe *for*? Such a book as Béranger's suggests this difficulty in its strongest form. It embodies the essence of all that pleasure-loving, pleasure-giving, unaccountable world in which men spend their lives; which they are compelled to live in, but which the moment you get out of it seems so odd, that you can hardly believe it is real. On this account, as we were saying before, there is no book the impression of which varies so much in different moods of mind. Sometimes no reading is so pleasant, at others you half despise and half hate the idea of it; it seems to sum up and make clear the littleness of your own nature (*Literary Studies*, vol. ii., p. 294).

I always thought this bit of Newmanism singularly out of place in an essay on Béranger, whose view of the strange world and bewildering events he was condemned to live in and among was quite free from frivolity; but Bagehot was too much of a moral and political philosopher, too much also of a banker, to be perfect as a critic of literature. It is very delightful to have a man of affairs writing about books. It is most refreshing and invigorating as well as unusual, but, of course, qualities have their defects. Mr. Bagehot is too much alive to the risks of the social structure, far too anxious lest any convention on which it seems to rest should be injured in the handling, to be quite at his ease on the pleasant slopes of Parnassus. For example, he never cared for *Tristram Shandy*, which, he thought, should be read in extracts. He calls it an indecent novel written by a clergyman. Had Sterne been in the diocese of Barchester in Mrs. Proudie's time, that would have been her view of *Tristram Shandy*. I can see her now wagging a forefinger, and hear her saying: "Surely, surely!" And she would have been quite right in saying what she said. But Mr. Bagehot will have it that *Tristram* is not a first-class book,

and hurls at its head an epithet that has now lost all its terrors; he calls it "provincial."

I am not here to defend *Tristram Shandy*. It is indecent, but "surely, surely" Archdeacon Paley was no more an indecent man than Archdeacon Grantley, and the author of the *Evidences of Christianity* declared that the *summum bonum* of human existence was to sit still and read *Tristram Shandy*. I shelter myself behind Archdeacon Paley.

A strain of very severe morality runs through all Mr. Bagehot's literary criticism. It is noticeable in his reviews of Thackeray and Dickens. I have no quarrel with it.

I have heard Mr. Bagehot called a paradoxical writer. This is absurd. A paradoxical talker he may have been. Conversation without paradox is apt to be dull as still champagne, but in his considered writings, after he had outgrown his boyish ὕβρις, a love of the truth is conspicuous throughout. He is pre-eminently a sensible, truthful man. But there is the rub; he hated dullness, apathy, pomposity, the time-worn phrase, the greasy platitude. His writings are an armoury of offensive weapons against pompous fools. The revenge taken by these paltry, meaningless persons is to hiss *paradox* whenever the name of their tormentor is mentioned.

Mr. Bagehot, in fact, possessed in large measure a quality he greatly admired, and with his usual happy gift of nomenclature called *animated moderation*. In his little book *Physics and Politics* he writes:

> If anyone were asked to describe what it is which distinguishes the writings of a man of genius, who is also a great man of the world, from all other writings, I think he would use the words, "animated moderation." He would say that

such writings are never slow, are never expansive, are never exaggerated; that they are always instinct with judgment, and yet that judgment is never a dull judgment; that they have as much spirit in them as would go to make a wild writer, and yet that every line of them is the product of a sane and sound writer. The best and almost perfect instance of this in English is Scott. Homer was perfect in it, as far as we can judge. Shakespeare is often perfect in it for long together; though then, from the defects of a bad education and a vicious age, he loses himself in excesses. Still, Homer, and Shakespeare at his best, and Scott, though in other respects so unequal to them, have this remarkable quality in common: this union of life with measure, of spirit with reasonableness.

Without stopping to compare Bagehot's books with the *Iliad*, with Shakespeare or with Scott, I may safely add their author to the list of "animated moderators." He is vivacious, witty, full of comparisons and examples, all colloquial, familiar; but he is never a wild writer, always sober however convivial, and a sensible man, whose definition of style was to write like a human being.

A most agreeable trait of his writings is his free-handedness. He practises no small economies, he makes you free of his house and table; he does not, as do some mercantile authors, hand you things across a counter. I have already referred to this characteristic, but I return to it because it is so agreeable. He writes like a gentleman. And not only is Mr. Bagehot free-handed, he is also full of pleasant surprises and delectable speculations. He leads you into a pleasant country, and delights you with a variegated landscape. Thus, in the book just mentioned, *Physics and Politics*, you suddenly encounter a most agreeable speculation as to how it happens that different styles of writing are fashionable at different times.

The true explanation is, I think, something like this. One considerable writer gets a sort of start, because what he writes is somewhat more—only a little more very often, as I believe—congenial to the minds around him than any other sort. This writer is very often not the one whom posterity remembers, not the one who carries the style of the age farthest towards its ideal type, and gives it its charm and its perfection. It was not Addison who began the essay-writing of Queen Anne's time, but Steele; it was the vigorous forward man who struck out the rough notion, though it was the wise and meditative man who improved upon it and elaborated it, and whom posterity reads. Some strong writer, or group of writers, thus seize on the public mind, and a curious process soon assimilates other writers in appearance to them. To some extent, no doubt, this assimilation is effected by a process most intelligible and not at all curious, the process of conscious imitation. A sees that B's style of writing answers, and he imitates it. But definitely-aimed mimicry like this is always rare; original men who like their own thoughts, do not willingly clothe them in words they feel they borrow. No man, indeed, can think to much purpose when he is studying to write a style not his own. After all, very few men are at all equal to the steady labour, the stupid and mistaken labour mostly, of *making* a style. Most men catch the words that are in the air, and the rhythm which comes to them they do not know from whence; an unconscious imitation determines their words and makes them say what of themselves they would never have thought of saying.

Everyone who has written in more than one newspaper knows how invariably his style catches the tone of another, when in turn he begins to write for that. He probably would rather write the traditional style to which the readers of the journal are used, but he does not set himself to copy it; he would have to force himself in order *not* to write it, if that was what he wanted. Exactly in this way, just as a writer for a journal without a distinctly framed purpose gives the readers of the journal the sort of words and the sort of thoughts they are used to, so on a larger scale, the writers of an age, without thinking of it, give to the readers of the age the sort of words and the sort of thoughts—the special literature, in fact—which those readers like and prize. And not only does the writer, without thinking, choose the sort of style and meaning which are most in vogue, but the writer is himself chosen. A writer does not begin to write in the traditional rhythm of an age unless he feels, or fancies he feels, a sort of aptitude for writing it; any more than a writer tries to write in a journal in which the style is uncongenial or impossible to him. Indeed, if he mistakes, he is soon weeded out; the

editor rejects, the age will not read, his compositions. How painfully this traditional style cramps great writers whom it happens not to suit is curiously seen in Wordsworth, who was bold enough to break through it, and, at the risk of contemporary neglect, to frame a style of his own. But he did so knowingly, and he did so with an effort.

As Mr. Bagehot's life advanced ill-health came to live with him; and to a man of his vivacity, adaptability and undying curiosity, it must have been hard whilst still in the middle passage of life to scent the night air; but there are few traces of despondency to be found in his writings. I can call to mind but one; it occurs in *Physics and Politics*, where he says:

> What writers are expected to write they write, or else they do not write at all, but, like the writer of these lines, stop discouraged, live disheartened and die, leaving fragments which their friends treasure but a rushing world never heeds.

Die Mr. Bagehot did in his fifty-first year, and it is easy to understand how a man of his grasp and scope would be disposed to cast an almost contemptuous glance upon his actual intellectual output. Well can I fancy his saying, "Call you *that* a life's work?" "The petty done, the undone vast" form a contrast Mr. Bagehot was the last man in the world to forget. But books, like their authors, have strange fates, and Mr. Bagehot's books have a destiny yet unfulfilled.

His first volume of collected essays, published in 1858 under the odd title *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen*, attracted the attention of a very few; but the same essays, when reprinted after his death with additions in two volumes and called *Literary Studies*, reached a large number of readers, many of whom belonged to the predatory

classes, who read books to make use of them. All Mr. Bagehot's other books had, considering their subjects, a really great sale. My copy of *Lombard Street* is, I notice, in the eighth edition. In the United States a large Insurance Company presented all their policy-holders with a complete set of Mr. Bagehot's works, printed and carefully revised (he was a somewhat careless writer) for the occasion. This I have been told on high authority. The special edition I have never seen. The example is one to be commended.

It can therefore hardly be said that the rushing world has paid no heed to what Mr. Bagehot humbly called his fragments. His friends still treasure them, and the popular judgment is likely to prove on their side. It is not wise to despise the popular judgment. Mr. Bagehot writes of John Austin: "Mr. Austin was always talking of the formidable community of fools." He had no popularity, little wish for popularity, little respect for popular judgment. This is a great error. The world is often wiser than any philosopher. "There is someone," said a great man of the world, "wiser than Voltaire and wiser than Napoleon; *c'est tout le monde*."

Give the world time and it will be right, and the last person it will willingly forget is a writer like Mr. Bagehot, who loved life better than books.

Doubtless Mr. Bagehot's delightful humoursomeness has a little interfered with his reputation as a philosopher, moral and political. It is a great shame, but one always remembers the playfulness of a writer—some purely human touch of his—so much better than one does his philosophy or

history. Mr. Bagehot in his essay on Lord Althorp has said some really excellent things about the great Reform Bill—things any man is the better for remembering; but the thing I always remember is the reason he gives for Lord Althorp's leaving off hunting after his wife's death, a loss he felt with terrible keenness. "He gave up," says Mr. Bagehot, "not only society, which was no great trial, but also hunting, not because he believed it to be wrong, but because he did not think it seemly or suitable that a man after such a loss should be so very happy *as he knew hunting would make him.*"

No one but Bagehot could have given this sentence the peculiar twist it now possesses.

How admirable, too, is his well-known jest, "A man's mother is his misfortune; his wife is his fault"; yet in a philosopher and economist such merriment is dangerous. But humour—particularly when it is good-humour—though it may sometimes get in a man's way, is never a permanent obstacle to his fame.

My time is up, and I have said very little. My object was not to give a précis of Mr. Bagehot's books—that must have been dull—or to assign him his true place in the providential order of the world—that would have been impertinent—but merely to shake the tree, so that you might see for yourselves, as the fruit fell from it, what a splendid crop it bears.

To know Walter Bagehot through his books is one of the good things of life.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH [1]

1905

MR. BRADLAUGH was a noticeable man, and his Life, even though it appears in the unwelcome but familiar shape of two octavo volumes, is a noticeable book. It is useless to argue with biographers; they, at all events, are neither utilitarians nor opportunists, but idealists pure and simple. What is the good of reminding them, being so majestical, of Guizot's pertinent remark, "that if a book is unreadable it will not be read," or of the older saying, "A great book is a great evil"? for all such observations they simply put on one side as being, perhaps, true for others, but not for them. Had Mr. Bradlaugh's Life been just half the size it would have had, at least, twice as many readers.

The pity is all the greater because Mrs. Bonner has really performed a difficult task after a noble fashion and in a truly pious spirit. Her father's life was a melancholy one, and it became her duty as his biographer to break a silence on painful subjects about which he had preferred to say nothing. His reticence was a manly reticence; though a highly sensitive mortal, he preferred to put up with calumny rather than lay bare

[1] *Charles Bradlaugh: A Record of His Life and Work.* By his daughter, Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner. Two vols. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894.

family sorrows and shame. His daughter, though compelled to break this silence, has done so in a manner full of dignity and feeling. The ruffians who in times past slandered the moral character of Bradlaugh will not probably read his Life, nor, if they did, would they repent of their baseness. The willingness to believe everything evil of an adversary is incurable, springing as it does from a habit of mind. It was well said by Mr. Mill: "I have learned from experience that many false opinions may be exchanged for true ones, without in the least altering the habits of mind of which false opinions are the result." Now that Mr. Bradlaugh is dead, no purpose is served by repeating false accusations as to his treatment of his wife, or of his pious brother, or as to his disregard of family ties; but the next atheist who crops up must not expect any more generous treatment than Bradlaugh received from that particularly odious class of persons of whom it has been wittily said that so great is their zeal for religion, they have never time to say their prayers.

Mr. Bradlaugh will, I suppose, be hereafter described in the dictionaries of biography as "Freethinker and Politician." Of the politician there is here no need to speak. He was a Radical of the old-fashioned type. When he first stood for Northampton in 1868, his election address was made up of tempting dishes, which afterwards composed Mr. Chamberlain's famous but unauthorised programme of 1885, with minority representation thrown in. Unpopular thinkers who have been pelted with stones by Christians,

slightly the worse for liquor, are apt to think well of minorities. Mr. Bradlaugh's Radicalism had an individualistic flavour. He thought well of thrift, thereby incurring censure. Mr. Bradlaugh's politics are familiar enough. What about his freethinking? English freethinkers may be divided into two classes—those who have been educated and those who have had to educate themselves. The former class might apply to their own case the language once employed by Dr. Newman to describe himself and his brethren of the Oratory:

> We have been nourished for the greater part of our lives in the bosom of the great schools and universities of Protestant England; we have been the foster-sons of the Edwards and Henries, the Wykehams and Wolseys, of whom Englishmen are wont to make so much; we have grown up amid hundreds of contemporaries, scattered at present all over the country in those special ranks of society which are the very walk of a member of the legislature.

These first-class freethinkers have an excellent time of it, and, to use a fashionable phrase, "do themselves very well indeed." They move freely in society; their books lie on every table; they hob-a-nob with Bishops; and when they come to die, their orthodox relations gather round them, and lay them in the earth "in the sure and certain hope"—so, at least, priestly lips are found willing to assert—"of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ." And yet there was not a dogma of the Christian faith in which they were in a position to profess their belief.

The freethinkers of the second class, poor fellows! have hitherto led very different lives. Their foster-parents have been poverty and hardship; their school education has usually terminated

at eleven; all their lives they have been desperately poor; alone, unaided, they have been left to fight the battle of a Free Press.

Richard Carlile, as honourable a man as most, and between whose religious opinions and (let us say) Lord Palmerston's there was probably no difference worth mentioning, spent nine out of the fifty-two years of his life in prison. Attorney-Generals, and, indeed, every degree of prosecuting counsel have abused this kind of freethinker, not merely with professional impunity, but amidst popular applause. Judges, speaking with emotion, have exhibited the utmost horror of atheistical opinions, and have railed in good set terms at the wretch who has been dragged before them, and have then, at the rising of the court, proceeded to their club and played cards till dinner-time with a first-class freethinker for partner.

This is natural and easily accounted for, but we need not be surprised if, in the biographies of second-class freethinkers, bitterness is occasionally exhibited towards the well-to-do brethren who decline what Dr. Bentley, in his Boyle Lectures, called "the public odium and resentment of the magistrate."

Mr. Bradlaugh was a freethinker of the second class. His father was a solicitor's clerk on a salary which never exceeded £2 2s. a week; his mother had been a nursery-maid; and he himself was born in 1833 in Bacchus Walk, Hoxton. At seven he went to a national school, but at eleven his school education ended, and he became an office-boy. At fourteen he was a wharf-clerk and cashier to a coal-merchant. His parents were not much

addicted to church-going, but Charles was from the first a serious boy, and became at a somewhat early age a Sunday-school teacher at St. Peter's, Hackney Road. The incumbent, in order to prepare him for Confirmation, set him to work to extract the Thirty-nine Articles out of the four Gospels. Unhappy task, worthy to be described by the pen of the biographer of John Sterling. The youthful wharfinger could not find the Articles in the Gospels, and informed the Rev. J. G. Packer of the fact. His letter conveying this intelligence is not forthcoming, and probably enough contained offensive matter, for Mr. Packer seems at once to have denounced young Bradlaugh as one engaged in atheistical inquiries, to have suspended him from the Sunday-school, to have made it very disagreeable for him at home and with his employer, and to have wound up by giving him three days to change his views or to lose his place.

Mr. Packer has been well abused, but it has never been the fashion to treat youthful atheists with much respect. When Coleridge confided to the Rev. James Boyer that he (S. T. Coleridge) was inclined to atheism, the reverend gentleman had him stripped and flogged. Mr. Packer, however, does seem to have been too hasty, for Bradlaugh did not formally abandon his beliefs until some months after his suspension. He retired for a short season, and studied Hebrew under Mr. James Savage, of Circus Street, Marylebone. He emerged an unbeliever, aged sixteen. Expelled from his wharf, he sold coal on commission, but his principal, if not his only customer, the wife of a baker, discovering that he was an infidel,

gave him no more orders, being afraid, so she said, that her bread would smell of brimstone.

In 1850 Bradlaugh published his first pamphlet, *A Few Words on the Christian Creed*, and dedicated it to the unhappy Mr. Packer. But starvation stared him in the face, and in the same year he enlisted in the 7th Dragoon Guards, and spent the next three years in Ireland, where he earned a good character, and on more occasions than one showed that adroitness for which he was afterwards remarkable.

In October, 1853, his mother and sister with great difficulty raised the £30 necessary to buy his discharge, and Bradlaugh returned to London, not only full grown, but well fed. Had he not taken the Queen's shilling he never would have lived to fight the battle he did.

He became a solicitor's clerk on a miserably small pay, and took to lecturing as "Iconoclast." In 1855 he was married at St. Philip's Church, Stepney. His lectures and discussions began to assume great proportions, and covered more than twenty years of his life. Terribly hard work they were. Profits there were none, or next to none. Few men have endured greater hardships.

In 1860 the *National Reformer* was started, and his warfare in the courts began. In 1868 he first stood for Northampton, which he unsuccessfully contested three times. In April, 1880, he was returned to Parliament, and then began the famous struggle with which the constitutional historian will have to deal. After this date the facts are well known. Bradlaugh died on January 30th, 1891.

His life was a hard one from beginning to end. He had no advantages. Nobody really helped him or influenced him or mollified him. He had never either money or repose; he had no time to travel, except as a propagandist, no time to acquire knowledge for its own sake; he was often abused but seldom criticised. In a single sentence, he was never taught the extent of his own ignorance.

His attitude towards the Christian religion and the Bible was a perfectly fair one, and ought not to have brought down upon him any abuse whatever. There are more ways than one of dealing with religion. It may be approached as a mystery or as a series of events supported by testimony. If the evidence is trustworthy, if the witnesses are irreproachable, if they submit successfully to examination and cross-examination, then, however remarkable or out of the way may be the facts to which they depose, they are entitled to be believed. This is a mode of treatment with which we are all familiar, whether as applied to the Bible or to the authority of the Church. Nobody is expected to believe in the authority of the Church until satisfied by the exercise of his reason that the Church in question possesses "the notes" of a true Church. This was the aspect of the question which engaged Bradlaugh's attention. He was critical, legal. He took objections, insisted on discrepancies, cross-examined as to credibility, and came to the conclusion that the case for the supernatural was not made out. And this he did not after the first-class fashion in the study or in octavo volumes, but in the street. His audiences were not Mr.

Mudie's subscribers, but men and women earning weekly wages. The coarseness of his language, the offensiveness of his imagery, have been greatly exaggerated. It is now a good many years since I heard him lecture in a northern town on the Bible to an audience almost wholly composed of artisans. He was bitter and aggressive, but the treatment he was then experiencing accounted for this. As an avowed atheist he received no quarter, and he might fairly say with Wilfred Osbaldistone, "It's hard I should get raps over the costard, and only pay you back in make-believes."

It was not what Bradlaugh said, but the people he said it to, that drew down upon him the censure of the magistrate, and (unkindest cut of all) the condemnation of the House of Commons.

Of all the evils from which the lovers of religion do well to pray that their faith may be delivered, the worst is that it should ever come to be discussed across the floor of the House of Commons. The self-elected champions of the Christian faith who then ride into the lists are of a kind well calculated to make Piety hide her head for very shame. Rowdy noblemen, intemperate country gentlemen, sterile lawyers, cynical but wealthy sceptics who maintain religion as another fence round their property, hereditary Nonconformists whose God is respectability and whose goal a baronetcy, contrive, with a score or two of bigots thrown in, to make a carnival of folly, a veritable devil's dance of blasphemy. The debates on Bradlaugh's oath-taking extended over four years, and will make melancholy reading for posterity. Two figures, and two figures only, stand out in solitary

grandeur, those of a Quaker and an Anglican—Bright and Gladstone.

The conclusion which an attentive reading of Mr. Bradlaugh's biography forces upon me is that in all probability he was the last freethinker who will be exposed, for many a long day (it would be more than usually rash to write "ever"), to pains and penalties for uttering his unbelief. It is true the Blasphemy Laws are not yet repealed; it may be true for all I know that Christianity is still part and parcel of the common law; it is possibly an indictable offence to lend *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible* to a friend; but, however these things may be, Mr. Bradlaugh's stock-in-trade is now free of the market-place, where just at present, at all events, its price is low. It has become pretty plain that neither the Fortress of Holy Scripture nor the Rock of Church Authority is likely to be taken by storm. The Mystery of Creation, the unsolvable problem of matter, continue to press upon us more heavily than ever. Neither by Paleys nor by Bradlaughs will religion be either bolstered up or pulled down. Sceptics and Sacramentarians must be content to put up with one another's vagaries for some time to come. Indeed, the new socialists, though at present but poor theologians (one hasty reading of *Lux Mundi* does not make a theologian), are casting favourable eyes upon Sacramentarianism, deeming it to have a distinct flavour of Collectivism. Calvinism, on the other hand, is considered repulsively individualistic, being based upon the notion that it is the duty of each man to secure his own salvation.

But whether Bradlaugh was the last of his race or not, he was a brave man whose life well deserves an honourable place amongst the biographies of those Radicals who have suffered in the cause of Free-thought, and into the fruits of whose labours others have entered.

SAINTE-BEUVE

1892

THE vivacious, the in fact far too vivacious, Abbé Galiani, writing to Madame d'Épinay, observes with unwonted seriousness: "Je remarque que le caractère dominant des Français perce toujours. Ils sont causeurs, raisonneurs, badins par essence; un mauvais tableau enfante une bonne brochure; ainsi, vous parlerez mieux des arts que vous n'en ferez jamais. Il se trouvera, au bout du compte, dans quelques siècles, que vous aurez le mieux raisonné, le mieux discuté ce que toutes les autres nations auront fait de mieux." To affect to foretell the final balance of an account which is not to be closed for centuries demands either celestial assurance or Neapolitan impudence; but, regarded as a guess, the Abbé's was a shrewd one. The *post-mortem* may prove him wrong, but can hardly prove him absurdly wrong.

We owe much to the French—enlightenment, pleasure, variety, surprise; they have helped us in a great many ways: amongst others, to play an occasional game of hide-and-seek with Puritanism, a distraction in which there is no manner of harm; unless, indeed, the demure damsel were to turn huffy, and after we had hidden ourselves, refuse to find us again. Then, indeed —to use a colloquial expression—there would be the devil to pay.

But nowhere have the French been so helpful, in nothing else has the change from the native to the foreign article been so delightful, as in this very matter of criticism upon which the Abbé Galiani had seized more than a hundred years ago. Mr. David Stott has lately published two small volumes of translations from the writings of Sainte-Beuve, the famous critic, who so long has been accepted as the type of all that is excellent in French criticism. French turned into English is always a woful spectacle—the pale, smileless corpse of what was once rare and radiant; but it is a thousand times better to read Sainte-Beuve or any other good foreign author in English than not to read him at all. Everybody has not time to emulate the poet Rowe, who learned Spanish in order to qualify himself, as he fondly thought, for a snug berth at Madrid, only to be told by his scholarly patron that now he could read *Don Quixote* in the original.

We hope these two volumes may be widely read, as they deserve to be, and that they may set their readers thinking what it is that makes Sainte-Beuve so famous a critic and so delightful a writer. His volumes are very numerous. "All Balzac's novels occupy a shelf," says Browning's Bishop; Sainte-Beuve's criticisms take up quite as much room. The *Causeries du Lundi* and the *Nouveaux Lundis* fill some twenty-eight tomes. *A priori*, one would be disposed to mutter, "There is more than enough." Can any man turned forty truthfully declare that he wishes De Quincey had left thirty volumes behind him instead of fifteen? Great is De Quincey, but so elaborate are his movements,

so tremendous his literary contortions, that when you have done with him you feel it would be cruelty to keep him stretched upon the rack of his own style for a moment longer. Sainte-Beuve is as easy as may be. Never before or since has there been an author so well content with his subject, whatever it might chance to be; so willing to be bound within its confines, and not to travel beyond it. In this excellent "stay-at-home" quality, he reminds the English reader more of Addison than of any of our later critics and essayists. These latter are too anxious to please, far too disposed to believe that, apart from themselves and their flashing wits, their readers can have no possible interest in the subject they have in hand. They are ever seeking to adorn their theme instead of exploring it. They are always prancing, seldom willing to take a brisk constitutional along an honest turnpike road. Even so admirable, so sensible a writer as Mr. Lowell is apt to worry us with his Elizabethan profusion of imagery, epithet, and wit. "Something too much of this," we cry out before we are half-way through. William Hazlitt, again, is really too witty. It is uncanny. Sainte-Beuve never teases his readers in this way. You often catch yourself wondering why it is you are interested, so matter-of-fact is his narrative. The dates of the births and deaths of his authors, the facts as to their parentage and education, are placed before you with stern simplicity, and without a single one of those quips and cranks which Carlyle ("God rest his soul!—he was a merry man") scattered with full hands over his explosive pages. But

yet if you are interested, as for the most part you are, what a triumph for sobriety and good sense! A noisy author is as bad as a barrel-organ; a quiet one is as refreshing as a long pause in a foolish sermon.

Sainte-Beuve covered an enormous range in his criticism; he took the Whole of Literature as his province. It is an amusing trait of many living authors whose odd craze it is to take themselves and what they are fond of calling their "work" —by which, if you please, they mean their rhymes and stories—very seriously indeed, to believe that critics exist for the purpose of calling attention to them—these living solemnities—and pointing out their varied excellences, or promise of excellence, to an eager book-buying public. To detect in some infant's squall the rich futurity of a George Eliot, to predict a glorious career for Gus Hoskins —this it is to be a true critic. For my part, I think a critic better occupied, though he be destitute of the genius of Lamb or Coleridge, in calling attention to the real greatnesses or shortcomings of dead authors than in dictating to his neighbours what they ought to think about living ones. If you teach me or help me to think aright about Milton, you can leave me to deal with *The Light of Asia* on my own account. Addison was better employed expounding the beauties of *Paradise Lost* to an unappreciative age than when he was puffing Philips and belittling Pope, or even than he would have been had he puffed Pope and belittled Philips.

Sainte-Beuve was certainly happier snuffing the "parfums du passé" than when ranging amongst

the celebrities of his own day. His admiration for Victor Hugo, which so notoriously grew cool, is supposed to have been by no means remotely connected with an admiration for Victor Hugo's wife. These things cannot be helped, but if you confine yourself to the past they cannot happen.

The method pursued by this distinguished critic during the years he was producing his weekly *Causerie*, was to shut himself up alone with his selected author—that is, with his author's writings, letters, and cognate works—for five days in the week. This was his period of immersion, of saturation. On the sixth day he wrote his criticism. On the seventh he did no manner of work. The following day the *Causerie* appeared, and its author shut himself up again with another set of books to produce another criticism. This was a workmanlike method. Sainte-Beuve had a genuine zeal to be a good workman in his own trade—the true instinct of the craftsman, always honoured in France, not so honoured as it deserves to be in England.

Sainte-Beuve's most careless reader cannot fail to observe his contentment with his subject, his restraint, and his good sense—all workmanlike qualities: but a more careful study of his writings fully warrants his title to the possession of other qualities it would be rash to rank higher, but which, here in England, we are accustomed to reward with more lavish praise—namely, insight, sympathy, and feeling.

To begin with, he was endlessly curious about people, without being in the least bit a gossip or a tattler. His interest never fails him, yet never

leads him astray. His skill in collecting the salient facts and in emphasising the important ones is marvellous. How unerring was his instinct in these matters the English reader is best able to judge by his handling of English authors so diverse and so difficult as Cowper, Gibbon, and Chesterfield. He never so much as stumbles. He understands Olney as well as Lausanne, Lady Austen and Mrs. Unwin as well as Madame Necker or the Hampshire Militia. One feels sure that he could have written a better paper on John Bunyan than Macaulay did, a wiser on John Wesley than anybody has ever done.

Next to his curiosity must be ranked his sympathy, a sympathy all the more contagious because so quietly expressed, and never purporting to be based on intellectual accord. He handles mankind tenderly though firmly. His interest in them is not merely scientific—his methods are scientific, but his heart is human. Read his three papers on Cowper over again, and you will agree with me. How thoroughly he appreciates the charm of Cowper's happy hours—his pleasant humour—his scholarlike fancies—his witty verse! No clumsy jesting about old women and balls of worsted. It is the mixture of insight with sympathy that is so peculiarly delightful.

Sainte-Beuve's feeling is displayed doubtless in many ways, but to me it is always most apparent when he is upholding modesty and grace and wisdom against their loud-mouthed opposites. When he is doing this, his words seem to quiver with emotion—the critic almost becomes the preacher. I gladly take an example from one of

the volumes already referred to. It occurs at the close of a paper on Camille Desmoulins, of whom Sainte-Beuve does his best to speak kindly, but the reaction comes — powerful, overwhelming, sweeping all before it:

> What a longing we feel after reading these pages, encrusted with mire and blood—pages which are the living image of the disorder in the souls and morals of those times! What a need we experience of taking up some wise book, where common-sense predominates, and in which the good language is but the reflection of a delicate and honest soul, reared in habits of honour and virtue! We exclaim: Oh! for the style of honest men—of men who have revered everything worthy of respect; whose innate feelings have ever been governed by the principles of good taste! Oh! for the polished, pure, and moderate writers! Oh! for Nicole's Essays, for D'Agues-seau writing the Life of his Father! Oh! Vauvenargues! Oh! Pellisson!

I have quoted from one volume; let me now quote from the other. I will take a passage from the paper on Madame de Souza:

> In stirring times, in moments of incoherent and confused imagination like the present, it is natural to make for the most important point, to busy one's self with the general working, and everywhere, even in literature, to strike boldly, aim high, and shout through trumpets and speaking-tubes. The modest graces will perhaps come back after a while, and come with an expression appropriate to their new surroundings. I would fain believe it; but while hoping for the best, I feel sure that it will not be to-morrow that their sentiments and their speech will once more prevail.

But I must conclude with a sentence from Sainte-Beuve's own pen. Of Joubert he says: "Il a une manière qui fait qu'il ne dit rien, absolument rien comme un autre. Cela est sensible dans les lettres qu'il écrit, et ne laisse pas de fatiguer à la longue." This is piercing criticism. Sainte-Beuve was always willing to write like another

man. Joubert was not. And yet, strange paradox! there will be always more men able to write in the strained style of Joubert than in the natural style of Sainte-Beuve. It is easier to be odd, intense, overwise, enigmatic, than to be sensible, simple, and to see the plain truth about things.

HANNAH MORE ONCE MORE

1906

I HAVE been told by more than one correspondent, and not always in words of urbanity, that I owe an apology to the *manes* of Miss Hannah More, whose works I once purchased in nineteen volumes for 8s. 6d., and about whom in consequence I wrote a page some ten years ago.[1]

To be accused of rudeness to a lady who exchanged witticisms with Dr. Johnson, soothed the widowed heart of Mrs. Garrick, directed the early studies of Macaulay, and in the spring of 1815 presented a small copy of her *Sacred Dramas* to Mr. Gladstone, is no light matter. To libel the dead is, I know, not actionable—indeed, it is impossible; but evil-speaking, lying, and slandering are canonical offences from which the obligation to refrain knows no limits of time or place.

I have often felt uneasy on this score, and never had the courage, until this very evening, to read over again what in the irritation of the moment I had been tempted to say about Miss Hannah More, after the outlay uopn her writings already mentioned. Eight shillings and sixpence is, indeed, no great sum, but nineteen octavo volumes are a good many books. Yet Richardson is in nineteen volumes in Mangin's edition, and Swift is in nine-

[1] See Vol. I., p. 278.

teen volumes in Scott's edition, and glorious John Dryden lacks but a volume to make a third example. True enough; yet it will, I think, be granted me that you must be very fond of an author, male or female, if nineteen octavo volumes, all his or hers, are not a little irritating and provocative of temper. Think of the room they take! As for selling them, it is not so easy to sell nineteen volumes of a stone-dead author, particularly if you live three miles from a railway-station and do not keep a trap. Elia, the gentle Elia, as it is the idiotic fashion to call a writer who could handle his "maulies" in a fray as well as Hazlitt himself, has told us how he could never see well-bound books he did not care about, but he longed to strip them so that he might warm his ragged veterans in their spoils. My copy of *Hannah More* was in full calf, but never once did it occur to me—though I, too, have many a poor author with hardly a shirt to his back shivering in the dark corners of the library—to strip her of her warm clothing. And yet I had to do something, and quickly too, for sorely needed was Miss More's shelf. So I buried the nineteen volumes in the garden. "Out of sight, out of mind," said I cheerfully, stamping them down.

This has hardly proved to be the case, for though Hannah More is incapable of a literary resurrection, and no one of her nineteen volumes has ever haunted my pillow, exclaiming,

> Think how thou stabb'dst me in my prime of youth,

nevertheless, I have not been able to get quite rid of an uneasy feeling that I was rude to her ten years ago in print—not, indeed, so rude as was

her revered friend Dr. Johnson one hundred and twenty-six years ago to her face; but then, I have not the courage to creep under the garberdine of our great Moralist.

When, accordingly, I saw on the counters of the trade the daintiest of volumes, hailing, too, from the United States, entitled *Hannah More*,[1] and perceived that it was a short biography and appreciation of the lady on my mind, I recognised that my penitential hour had at last come. I took the little book home with me, and sat down to read, determined to do justice and more than justice to the once celebrated mistress of Cowslip Green and Barley Wood.

Mrs. Harland's preface is most engaging. She reminds a married sister how in the far-off days of their childhood in a Southern State their Sunday reading, usually confined or sought to be confined, to "bound sermons and semi-detached tracts," was enlivened by the *Works of Hannah More*. She proceeds as follows:

> At my last visit to you I took from your bookshelves one of a set of volumes in uniform binding of full calf, coloured mellowly by the touch and the breath of fifty odd years. They belonged to the dear old home library. . . . The leaves of the book I held fell apart at *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*.

I leave my readers to judge how uncomfortable these innocent words made me:

> The usher took six hasty strides
> As smit with sudden pain.

I knew that set of volumes, their distressing uniformity of binding, their full calf. Their very

[1] *Hannah More*, by Marian Harland. New York and London: G. P. Putnam.

fellows lie mouldering in an East Anglian garden, mellow enough by this time and strangely coloured.

Circumstances alter cases. Mrs. Harland thinks that if the life of Charlotte Brontë's mother had been mercifully spared, the authoress of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* might have grown up more like Hannah More than she actually did. Perhaps so. As I say, circumstances alter cases, and if the works of Hannah More had been in my old home library, I might have read *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* and *The Search after Happiness* of a Sunday, and found solace therein. But they were not there, and I had to get along as best I could with the *Pilgrim's Progress*, stories by A. L. O. E., the crime-stained page of Mrs. Sherwood's *Tales from the Church Catechism*, and, "more curious sport than that," the *Bible in Spain* of the never-sufficiently-bepraised George Borrow.

What, however, is a little odd about Mrs. Harland's enthusiasm for Hannah More's writings is that it expires with the preface. *There*, indeed, it glows with a beautiful light:

> And *The Search after Happiness*! You cannot have forgotten all of the many lines we learned by heart on Sunday afternoons in the joyful spring-time when we were obliged to clear the pages every few minutes of yellow jessamine bells and purple wistaria petals flung down by the warm wind.

This passage lets us into the secret. I suspect in sober truth both Mrs. Harland and her sister have long since forgotten all the lines in *The Search after Happiness*, but what they have never forgotten, what they never can forget, are the jessamine bells and the wistaria petals, yellow and purple, blown about in the warm winds that visited their now

desolate and forsaken Southern home. Less beautiful things than jessamine and wistaria, if only they clustered round the house where you were born, are remembered when the lines of far better authors than Miss Hannah More have gone clean out of your head:

> As life wanes, all its care and strife and toil
> Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees
> Which grew by our youth's home, the waving mass
> Of climbing plants heavy with bloom and dew,
> The morning swallows with their songs like words—
> All these seem clear, and only worth our thoughts.

Thus the youthful Browning in his marvellous *Pauline*. The same note is struck after a humbler and perhaps more moving fashion in the following simple strain of William Allingham:

> Four ducks on a pond,
> A grass-bank beyond;
> A blue sky of spring,
> White clouds on the wing;
> How little a thing
> To remember for years—
> To remember with tears!

If this be so—and who, looking into his own heart, but must own that so it is?—it explains how it comes about that as soon as Mrs. Harland finished her preface, got away from her childhood and began her biography, she has so little to tell us about Miss More's books, and from that little the personal note of enjoyment is entirely wanting. Indeed, though a pious soul, she occasionally cannot restrain her surprise how such ponderous commonplaces ever found a publisher, to say nothing of a reader.

"Such books as Miss More's," she says, "would to-day in America fall from the press like a stone

into the depths of the sea of oblivion, creating no more sensation upon the surface than the bursting of a bubble in mid-Atlantic."

And again:

"That Hannah More was a power for righteousness in her long generation we must take upon the testimony of her best and wisest contemporaries."

However good may be your intentions, it seems hard to avoid being rude to this excellent lady.

I confess I never liked her love story. Anything more cold-blooded I never read. I am not going to repeat it. Why should I? It is told at length in Miss More's authorised biography in four volumes by William Roberts, Esq. I saw a copy yesterday exposed for sale in New Oxford Street, price 1s. Mrs. Harland also tells the tale, not without chuckling. I refer the curious to her pages.

Then there are those who can never get rid of the impression that Hannah More "fagged" her four sisters mercilessly; but who can tell? Some people like being fagged.

Precisely *when* Miss More bade farewell to what in later life she was fond of calling her gay days, when she wrote dull plays and went to stupid Sunday parties, one finds it hard to discover, but at no time did it ever come home to her that she needed repentance herself. She seems always thinking of the sins and shortcomings of her neighbours, rich and poor. Sometimes, indeed, when deluged with flattery, she would intimate that she was a miserable sinner, but that is not what I mean. She concerned herself greatly with the manners of the great, and deplored their cards and fashionable falsehoods. John Newton, captain

as he had been of a slaver, saw the futility of such pin-pricks:

"The fashionable world," so he wrote to Miss More, "by their numbers form a phalanx not easily impressible, and their habits of life are as armour of proof which renders them not easily vulnerable. Neither the rude club of a boisterous Reformer nor the pointed, delicate weapons of the authoress before me can overthrow or rout them."

But Miss More never forgot to lecture the rich or to patronise the poor.

Cœlebs in Search of a Wife is an impossible book, and I do not believe Miss Harland has read it; but as for the famous *Shepherd*, we are never allowed to forget how Mr. Wilberforce declared a few years before his death, to the admiration of the religious world, that he would rather present himself in heaven with *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* in his hand than with—what think you?—*Peveril of the Peak*! The bare notion of such a proceeding on anybody's part is enough to strike one dumb with what would be horror, did not amazement swallow up every other feeling. What rank Arminianism! I am sure the last notion that ever would have entered the head of Sir Walter was to take *Peveril* to heaven.

But whatever may be thought of the respective merits of Miss More's nineteen volumes and Sir Walter's ninety-eight, there is no doubt that Barley Wood was as much infested with visitors as ever was Abbotsford. Eighty a week!

"From twelve o'clock until three each day a constant stream of carriages and pedestrians

filled the ever-green bordered avenue leading from the Wrington village road."

Among them came Lady Gladstone and W. E. G., aged six, the latter carrying away with him the *Sacred Dramas*, to be preserved during a long life.

Miss More was a vivacious and agreeable talker, who certainly failed to do herself justice with her pen. Her health was never good, yet, as she survived thirty-five of her prescribing physicians, her vitality must have been great. Her face in Opie's portrait is very pleasant. If I was rude to her ten years ago, I apologise and withdraw; but as for her books, I shall leave them where they are—buried in a cliff facing due north, with nothing between them and the Pole but leagues upon leagues of a wind-swept ocean.

Note, 1922.—What rash words are these! In 1914, and during my absence, the War Office (without notice) entered upon my garden, and dug a deep hole for the reception of hand-grenades ready for use to repel an invader. The spot selected for this operation was the very one where Miss More's nineteen volumes lay buried. What became of the mouldering remains I cannot say, but I fear they are no longer there.

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF

1904

MISS MATHILDE BLIND, in the introduction to her animated and admirable translation of the now notorious *Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff*, asks an exceedingly relevant question—namely, "Is it well or is it ill done to make the world our father confessor?" Miss Blind does not answer her own question, but passes on her way content with the observation that, be it well or ill done, it is supremely interesting. Translators have, indeed, no occasion to worry about such inquiries. It is hard enough for them to make their author speak another language than his own, without stopping to ask whether he ought to have spoken at all. Their business is to make their author known. As for the author himself, he, of course, has a responsibility; but, as a rule, he is only thinking of himself, and only anxious to excite interest in that subject. If he succeeds in doing this, he is indifferent to everything else. And in this he is encouraged by the world.

Burns, in his exuberant generosity, was sure that it could afford small pleasure

> Even to a deil
> To skelp and scaud poor dogs like me,
> And hear us squeal;

but whatever may be the devil's taste, there is nothing the reading public like better than to hear

the squeal of some self-torturing atom of humanity. And, as the atoms have found this out, a good deal of squealing may be confidently anticipated.

The eclipse of faith has not proved fatal by any means to the instinct of confession. There is a noticeable desire to make humanity or the reading public our residuary legatee, to endow it with our experiences, to enrich it with our egotisms, to strip ourselves bare in the market-place—if not for the edification, at all events for the amusement, of man. All this is accomplished by autobiography. We then become interesting, probably for the first time, as, to employ Mlle. Bashkirtseff's language, "documents of human nature."

The metaphor carries us far. To falsify documents by addition, or to garble them by omission, is an offence of grave character, though of frequent occurrence. Is there, then, to be no reticence in autobiography? Are the documents of human nature to be printed at length?

These are questions which each autobiographer must settle for himself. If what is published is interesting for any reason whatsoever, be it the work of pious sincerity or diseased self-consciousness, the world will read it, and either applaud the piety or ridicule the absurdity of the author. If it is not interesting it will not be read.

Therefore, to consider the ethics of autobiography is to condemn yourself to the academy. *Rousseau's Confessions* ought never to have been written; but written they were, and read they will ever be. But as a pastime moralising has a rare charm. We cannot always be reading immoral masterpieces. A time comes when inaction is

pleasant, and when it is soothing to hear mild accents murmuring "Thou shalt not." For a moment, then, let the point remain under consideration.

The ethics of autobiography are, in my judgment, admirably summed up by George Eliot, in a passage in *Theophrastus Such*, a book which, we were once assured, well-nigh destroyed the reputation of its author, but which would certainly have established that of most living writers upon a surer foundation than they at present occupy. George Eliot says:

> In all autobiography there is, nay, ought to be, an incompleteness which may have the effect of falsity. We are each of us bound to reticence by the piety we owe to those who have been nearest to us, and have had a mingled influence over our lives—by the fellow-feeling which should restrain us from turning our volunteered and picked confessions into an act of accusation against others who have no chance of vindicating themselves, and, most of all, by that reverence for the higher efforts of our common nature which commands us to bury its lowest faculties, its invincible remnants of the brute, its most agonising struggle with temptation, in unbroken silence.

All this is surely sound morality and good manners, but it is not the morality or the manners of Mlle. Marie Bashkirtseff, who was always ready to barter everything for something she called Fame.

"If I don't win fame," says she over and over again, "I will kill myself."

Miss Blind is, no doubt, correct in her assertion that, as a painter, Mlle. Bashkirtseff's strong point was expression. Certainly, she had a great gift that way with her pen. Amidst a mass of greedy utterances, esurient longings, commonplace ejaculations, and unlovely revelations, passages occur in this journal which bid us hold. For all her

boastings, her sincerity is not always obvious, but it speaks plainly through each one of the following words:

What is there in us, that, in spite of plausible arguments —in spite of the consciousness that all leads to *nothing*—we should still grumble? I know that, like everyone else, I am going on towards death and nothingness. I weigh the circumstances of life, and, whatever they may be, they appear to me miserably vain, and, for all that, I cannot resign myself. Then, it must be a force; it must be a *something*—not merely "a passage," a certain period of time, which matters little whether it is spent in a palace or in a cellar; there is, then, something stronger, truer, than our foolish phrases about it all. It is life, in short; not merely a passage—an unprofitable misery—but life, all that we hold most dear, all that we call ours, in short.

People say it is nothing, because we do not possess eternity. Ah! the fools. Life is ourselves, it is ours, it is all that we possess; how, then, is it possible to say that it is *nothing*? If this is *nothing*, show me *something*.

To deride life is indeed foolish. Prosperous people are apt to do so, whether their prosperity be of this world or anticipated in the next. The rich man bids the poor man lead an abstemious life in his youth, and scorn delights, in order that he may have the wherewithal to spend a dull old age; but the poor man replies: "Your arrangements have left me nothing but my youth. I will enjoy that, and *you* shall support me in a dull old age."

To deride life, I repeat, is foolish; but to pity yourself for having to die is to carry egotism rather too far. This is what Mlle. Bashkirtseff does.

I am touched myself when I think of my end. No, it seems impossible! Nice, fifteen years, the three Graces, Rome, the follies of Naples, painting, ambition, unheard-of hopes—to end in a coffin, without having had anything, not even love.

Impossible, indeed! There is not much use for that word in the human comedy.

Never, surely, before was there a lady so penetrated with her own personality as the writer of these journals. Her arms and legs, hips and shoulders, hopes and fears, pictures and future glory, are all alike scanned, admired, stroked, and pondered over. She reduces everything to one vast common denominator—herself. She gives two francs to a starving family.

It was a sight to see the joy, the surprise of these poor creatures. I hid myself behind the trees. Heaven has never treated me so well; heaven has never had any of these beneficent fancies.

Heaven had, at all events, never heard the like of this before. Here is a human creature brought up in what is called the lap of luxury, wearing purple and fine linen, and fur cloaks worth 2000 francs, eating and drinking to repletion, and indulging herself in every fancy; she divides a handful of coppers amongst five starving persons, and then retires behind a tree, and calls God to witness that no such kindness had ever been extended to her.

When Mlle. Elsnitz, her long-suffering companion—"young, only nineteen, unfortunate, in a strange house without a friend"—at last, after suffering many things, leaves the service, it is recorded:

I could not speak for fear of crying, and I affected a careless look, but I hope she may have seen.

Seen what? Why, that the carelessness was unreal. A quite sufficient reparation for months of insolence, in the opinion of Miss Marie.

It is said that Mlle. Bashkirtseff had a great faculty of enjoyment. If so, except in the case of

books, she hardly makes it felt. Reading she evidently intensely enjoyed; but, though there is a good deal of rapture about Nature in her journals, it is of an uneasy character.

> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is amongst the lonely hills,

do not pass into the souls of those whose ambition it is to be greeted with loud cheers by the whole wide world.

Whoever is deeply interested in himself always invents a God whom he can apostrophise on suitable occasions. The existence of this deity feeds his creator's vanity. When the world turns a deaf ear to his broken cries he besieges heaven. The Almighty, so he flatters himself, cannot escape him. When there is no one else to have recourse to, when all other means fail, there still remains —God. When your father, and your mother, and your aunt, and your companion, and your maid, are all wearied to death by your exhaustless vanity, you have still another string to your bow. Sometimes, indeed, the strings may get entangled.

> Just now, I spoke harshly to my aunt, but I could not help it. She came in just when I was weeping with my hands over my face, and was summoning God to attend to me a little.

A book like this makes one wonder what power, human or divine, can exorcise such a demon of vanity as that which possessed the soul of this most unhappy girl. Carlyle strove with great energy in *Sartor Resartus* to compose a spell which should cleave this devil in three. For a time it worked well and did some mischief, but now the magician's wand seems broken. Religion, indeed,

can still show her conquests, and, when we are considering a question like this, seems a fresher thing than it does when we are reading *Lux Mundi*.

"Do you want," wrote General Gordon in his journal, "to be loved, respected, and trusted? Then ignore the likes and dislikes of man in regard to your actions; leave their love for God's, taking Him only. You will find that as you do so men will like you; they may despise some things in you, but they will lean on you, and trust you, and He will give you the spirit of comforting them. But try to please men and ignore God, and you will fail miserably and get nothing but disappointment."

All those who have not yet read these journals, and prefer doing so in English, should get Miss Blind's volumes. There they will find this "human document" most vigorously translated into their native tongue. It, perhaps, sounds better in French.

One remembers George Eliot's tale of the lady who tried to repeat in English the pathetic story of a French mendicant—"J'ai vu le sang de mon père"—but failed to excite sympathy, owing to the hopeless realism of Saxon speech. But though better in French, the journal is interesting in English. Whether, like the dreadful Dean, you regard man as an odious race of vermin, or agree with an erecter spirit that he is a being of infinite capacity, you will find food for your philosophy, and texts for your sermons in the *Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff*.

A CONNOISSEUR

1905

IT must always be rash to speak positively about human nature, whose various types of character are singularly tough, and endure, if not for ever, for a very long time; yet some types do seem to show signs of wearing out. The connoisseur, for example, here in England is hardly what he was. He has specialised, and behind him there is now the bottomless purse of the multi-millionaire, who buys as he is bidden, and has no sense of prices. If the multi-millionaire wants a thing, why should he not have it? The gaping mob, penniless but appreciative, looks on and cheers his pluck.

Mr. Frederick Locker, about whom I wish to write a few lines, was an old-world connoisseur, the shy recesses of whose soul Addison might have penetrated in the page of a *Spectator*—and a delicate operation it would have been.

My father-in-law was only once in the witness-box. I had the felicity to see him there. It was a dispute about the price of a picture, and in the course of his very short evidence he hazarded the opinion that the grouping of the figures (they were portraits) was in bad taste. The Judge, the late Mr. Justice Cave, an excellent lawyer of the old school, snarled out, "Do you think you could

explain to *me* what is taste?" Mr. Locker surveyed the Judge through the eye-glass which seemed almost part of his being, with a glance modest, deferential, deprecatory, as if suggesting "Who am *I* to explain anything to *you*?" but at the same time critical, ironical, and humorous. It was but for one brief moment; the eyeglass dropped, and there came the mournful answer, as from a man baffled at all points: "No, my lord; I should find it impossible!" The Judge grunted a ready, almost a cheerful, assent.

Properly to describe Mr. Locker, you ought to be able to explain both to judge and jury what you mean by taste. He sometimes seemed to me to be *all* taste. Whatever subject he approached —was it the mystery of religion, or the moralities of life, a poem or a print, a bit of old china or a human being—whatever it might be, it was along the avenue of taste that he gently made his way up to it. His favourite word of commendation was *pleasing*, and if he ever brought himself to say (and he was not a man who scattered his judgments, rather was he extremely reticent of them) of a man, and still more of a woman, that he or she was *unpleasing*, you almost shuddered at the fierceness of the condemnation, knowing, as all Locker's intimate friends could not help doing, what the word meant to him. "Attractive" was another of his critical instruments. He meets Lord Palmerston, and does not find him "attractive" (*My Confidences*, p. 155).

This is a temperament which when cultivated, as it was in Mr. Locker's case, by a life-long familiarity with beautiful things in all the arts and

crafts, is apt to make its owner very susceptible to what some stirring folk may not unjustly consider the trifles of life. Sometimes Locker might seem to overlook the dominant features, the main object of the existence, either of a man or of some piece of man's work, in his sensitively keen perception of the beauty, or the lapse from beauty, of some trait of character or bit of workmanship. This may have been so. Mr. Locker was more at home, more entirely his own delightful self, when he was calling your attention to some humorous touch in one of Bewick's tail-pieces, or to some plump figure in a group by his favourite Stothard, than when handling a Michael Angelo drawing or an amazing Blake. Yet, had it been his humour, he could have played the showman to Michael Angelo and Blake at least as well as to Bewick, Stothard, or Chodowiecki. But a modesty, marvellously mingled with irony, was of the very essence of his nature. No man expatiated less. He never expounded anything in his born days; he very soon wearied of those he called "strong" talkers. His critical method was in a conversational manner to direct your attention to something in a poem or a picture, to make a brief suggestion or two, perhaps to apply an epithet, and it was all over, but your eyes were opened. Rapture he never professed, his tones were never loud enough to express enthusiasm, but his enjoyment of what he considered good, wherever he found it—and he was regardless of the set judgments of the critics—was most intense and intimate. His feeling for anything he liked was fibrous: he clung to it. For all his rare books and prints, if he liked

a thing he was very tolerant of its *format*. He would cut a drawing out of a newspaper, frame it, hang it up, and be just as tender towards it as if it were an impression with the unique *remarque*.

Mr. Locker had probably inherited his virtuoso's whim from his ancestors. His great-grandfather was certified by Johnson in his life of Addison to be a gentleman "eminent for curiosity and literature," and though his grandfather, the Commodore, who lives for ever in our history as the man who taught Nelson the lesson that saved an Empire—"Lay a Frenchman close, and you will beat him"—was no collector, his father, Edward Hawke Locker, though also a naval man, was not only the friend of Sir Walter Scott, but a most judicious buyer of pictures, prints, and old furniture.

Frederick Locker was born in 1821, in Greenwich Hospital, where Edward Hawke Locker was Civil Commissioner. His mother was the daughter of one of the greatest book-buyers of his time, a man whose library it took nine days to disperse —the Rev. Jonathan Boucher, the friend and opponent of George Washington, an ecclesiastic who might have been first Bishop of Edinburgh, but who died a better thing, the Vicar of Epsom.

Frederick Locker grew up among pretty things in the famous hospital. Water-colours by Lawrence, Prout, Girtin, Turner, Chinnery, Paul Sandby, Cipriani, and other masters; casts after Canova; mezzotints after Sir Joshua; Hogarth's famous picture of David Garrick and his wife, now well hung in Windsor Castle, were about him, and early attracted his observant eye. Yet the same things were about his elder brother Arthur,

an exceedingly clever fellow, who remained quite curiously impervious to the impressiveness of pretty things all his days.

Locker began collecting on his own account after his marriage, in 1850, to a daughter of Lord Byron's enemy, the Lord Elgin who brought the marbles from Athens to Bloomsbury. His first object, at least so he thought, was to make his rooms pretty. From the beginning of his life as a connoisseur he spared himself no pains, often trudging miles, when not wanted at the Admiralty Office, in search of his prey. If any mercantile-minded friend ever inquired what anything had cost, he would be answered with a rueful smile, "Much shoe leather." He began with old furniture, china, and bric-à-brac, which ere long somewhat inconveniently filled his small rooms. Prices rose, and means in those days were as small as the rooms. No more purchases of Louis Seize and blue majolica and Palissy ware could be made. Drawings by the old masters and small pictures were the next objects of the chase. Here again the long purses were soon on his track, and the pursuit had to be abandoned, but not till many treasures had been garnered. Last of all he became a book-hunter, beginning with little volumes of poetry and the drama from 1590 to 1610; and as time went on the boundaries expanded, but never so as to include black letter.

I dare not say Mr. Locker had all the characteristics of a great collector, or that he was entirely free from the whimsicalities of the tribe of connoisseurs, but he was certainly endowed with the chief qualifications for the pursuit of rarities, and

remained clear of the unpleasant vices that so often mar men's most innocent avocations. Mr. Locker always knew what he wanted and what he did not want, and never could be persuaded to take the one for the other; he did not grow excited in the presence of the quarry; he had patience to wait, and to go on waiting, and he seldom lacked courage to buy.

He rode his own hobby-horse, never employing experts as buyers. For quantity he had no stomach. He shrank from numbers. He was not a Bodleian man; he had not the sinews to grapple with libraries. He was the connoisseur throughout. Of the huge acquisitiveness of a Heber or a Huth he had not a trace. He hated a crowd, of whatsoever it was composed. He was apt to apologise for his possessions, and to depreciate his tastes. As for boasting of a treasure, he could as easily have eaten beef at breakfast.

So delicate a spirit, armed as it was for purposes of defence with a rare gift of irony and a very shrewd insight into the weaknesses and noisy falsettos of life, was sure to be misunderstood. The dull and coarse witted found Locker hard to make out. He struck them as artificial and elaborate, perhaps as frivolous, and yet they felt uneasy in his company lest there should be a lurking ridicule behind his quiet, humble demeanour. There was, indeed, always an element of mockery in Locker's humility.

An exceedingly spiteful account of him, in which it is asserted that "most of his rarest books are miserable copies" (how book-collectors can hate one another!), ends with the reluctant admission:

"He was eminently a gentleman, however, and his manners were even courtly, yet virile." Such extorted praise is valuable.

I can see him now before me, with a nicely graduated foot-rule in his delicate hand, measuring with grave precision the height to a hair of his copy of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), for the purpose of ascertaining whether it was taller or shorter than one being vaunted for sale in a bookseller's catalogue just to hand. His face, one of much refinement, was a study, exhibiting alike a fixed determination to discover the exact truth about the copy and a humorous realisation of the inherent triviality of the whole business. Locker was a philosopher as well as a connoisseur.

The Rowfant Library has disappeared. Great possessions are great cares. "But ships are but boards, sailors but men; there be land-rats, water-thieves, and land-thieves—I mean pirates; and then there is the peril of waters, winds and rocks." To this list the nervous owner of rare books must add fire, that dread enemy of all the arts. It is often difficult to provide stabling for dead men's hobby-horses. It were perhaps absurd in a world like this to grow sentimental over a parcel of old books. Death, the great unbinder, must always make a difference.

Mr. Locker's poetry now forms a volume of the "Golden Treasury Series." The *London Lyrics* are what they are. They have been well praised by good critics, and have themselves been made the subject of good verse.

> Apollo made one April day
> A new thing in the rhyming way;

Its turn was neat, its wit was clear,
It wavered 'twixt a smile and tear.
Then Momus gave a touch satiric,
And it became a *London Lyric*.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

In another copy of verses Mr. Dobson adds:

Or where discern a verse so neat,
So well-bred and so witty—
So finished in its least conceit,
So mixed of mirth and pity?

Pope taught him rhythm, Prior ease,
Praed buoyancy and banter;
What modern bard would learn from these?
Ah, *tempora mutantur!*

Nothing can usefully be added to criticism so just, so searching, and so happily expressed.

Some of the *London Lyrics* have, I think, achieved what we poor mortals call immortality—a strange word to apply to the piping of so slender a reed, to so slight a strain—yet

In small proportions we just beauties see.

It is the simplest strain that lodges longest in the heart. Mr. Locker's strains are never precisely *simple*. The gay enchantment of the world and the sense of its bitter disappointments murmur through all of them, and are fatal to their being simple, but the unpretentiousness of a *London Lyric* is akin to simplicity.

His relation to his own poetry was somewhat peculiar. A critic in every fibre, he judged his own verses with a severity he would have shrunk from applying to those of any other rhyming man. He was deeply dissatisfied, almost on bad terms, with himself, yet for all that he was convinced that he had written some very good verses indeed. His

poetry meant a great deal to him, and he stood in need of sympathy and of allies against his own despondency. He did not get much sympathy, being a man hard to praise, for unless he agreed with your praise it gave him more pain than pleasure.

I am not sure that Mr. Dobson agrees with me, but I am very fond of Locker's paraphrase of one of Clément Marot's *Épigrammes*; and as the lines are redolent of his delicate connoisseurship, I will quote both the original (dated 1544) and the paraphrase:

DU RYS DE MADAME D'ALLEBRET

Elle a très bien ceste gorge d'albastre,
Ce doulx parler, ce cler tainct, ces beaux yeulx:
Mais en effect, ce petit rys follastre,
C'est à mon gré ce qui lui sied le mieulx;
Elle en pourroit les chemins et les lieux
Où elle passe à plaisir inciter;
Et si ennuy me venoit contrister
Tant que par mort fust ma vie abbattue,
Il me fauldroit pour me resusciter
Que ce rys là duquel elle me tue.

How fair those locks which now the light wind stirs!
What eyes she has, and what a perfect arm!
And yet methinks that little Laugh of hers—
That little Laugh—is still her crowning charm.
Where'er she passes, countryside or town,
The streets make festa and the fields rejoice.
Should sorrow come, as 'twill, to cast me down,
Or Death, as come he must, to hush my voice,
Her Laugh would wake me just as now it thrills me—
That little, giddy Laugh wherewith she kills me.

'Tis the very laugh of Millamant in *The Way of the World*! "I would rather," cried Hazlitt, "have seen Mrs. Abington's Millamant than any Rosalind that ever appeared on the stage." Such wishes are idle. Hazlitt never saw Mrs. Abington's

Millamant. I have seen Miss Ethel Irving's Millamant, *dulce ridentem*, and it was that little giddy laugh of hers that reminded me of Marot's epigram and of Frederick Locker's paraphrase. So do womanly charms endure from generation to generation, and it is one of the duties of poets to record them.

In 1867 Mr. Locker published his *Lyra Elegantiarum. A Collection of Some of the Best Specimens of Vers de Société and Vers d'Occasion in the English Language by Deceased Authors.* In his preface Locker gave what may now be fairly called the "classical" definition of the verses he was collecting.

> *Vers de société* and *vers d'occasion* should [so he wrote] be short, elegant, refined, and fanciful, not seldom distinguished by chastened sentiment, and often playful. The tone should not be pitched high; it should be idiomatic and rather in the conversational key; the rhythm should be crisp and sparkling, and the rhyme frequent and never forced, while the entire poem should be marked by tasteful moderation, high finish and completeness; for however trivial the subject-matter may be—indeed, rather in proportion to its triviality, subordination to the rules of composition and perfection of execution should be strictly enforced. The definition may be further illustrated by a few examples of pieces, which, from the absence of some of the foregoing qualities, or from the excess of others, cannot be properly regarded as *vers de société*, though they may bear a certain generic resemblance to that species of poetry. The ballad of *John Gilpin* for example, is too broadly and simply ludicrous; Swift's *Lines on the Death of Marlborough*, and Byron's *Windsor Poetics*, are too savage and truculent; Cowper's *My Mary* is far too pathetic; Herrick's lyrics to *Blossoms* and *Daffodils* are too elevated; *Sally in our Alley* is too homely and too entirely simple and natural; while the *Rape of the Lock*, which would otherwise be one of the finest specimens of *vers de société* in any language, must be excluded on account of its length, which renders it much too important.

I have made this long quotation because it is

an excellent example of Mr. Locker's way of talking about poets and poetry, and of his intimate, searching, and unaffected criticism.

Lyra Elegantiarum is a real, not a bookseller's collection. Mr. Locker was a great student of verse. There was hardly a stanza of any English poet, unless it was Spenser, for whom he had no great affection, which he had not pondered over and clearly considered as does a lawyer his cases. He delighted in a complete success, and grieved over any lapse from the fold of metrical virtue, over any ill-sounding rhyme or unhappy expression. The circulation of *Lyra Elegantiarum* was somewhat interfered with by a "copyright" question. Mr. Locker had a great admiration for Landor's short poems, and included no less than forty-one of them, which he chose with the utmost care. Publishers are slow to perceive that the best chance of getting rid of their poetical wares (and Landor was not popular) is to have attention called to the artificer who produced them. The Landorian publisher objected,[1] and the *Lyra* had to be "suppressed"—a fine word full of hidden meanings. The second-hand booksellers, a wily race, were quick to perceive the significance of this, and have for more than thirty years obtained inflated prices for their early copies, being able to vend them as possessing the "suppressed verses." There is a great deal of Locker in this collection. To turn its pages is to renew intercourse with its editor.

In 1879 another little volume instinct with his

[1] Mr. Forster, Landor's executor, tore up a copy of the *Lyra* he found in the drawing-room of the *Athenæum*.

personality came into existence and made friends for itself. He called it *Patchwork*, and to have given it any other name would have severely taxed his inventiveness. It is a collection of stories, of *ana*, of quotations in verse and prose, of original matter, of character-sketches, of small adventures, of table-talk, and of other things besides, if other things, indeed, there be. If you know *Patchwork* by heart you are well equipped. It is intensely original throughout, and never more original than when its matter is borrowed. Readers of *Patchwork* had heard of Mr. Creevey long before Sir Herbert Maxwell once again let that politician loose upon an unlettered society.

The book had no great sale, but copies evidently fell into the hands of the more judicious of the pressmen, who kept it by their sides, and every now and again

Waled a portion with judicious care

for quotation in their columns. The *Patchwork* stories thus got into circulation one by one. Kind friends of Mr. Locker's, who had been told, or had discovered for themselves, that he was somewhat of a wag, would frequently regale him with bits of his own *Patchwork*, introducing them to his notice as something they had just heard, which they thought he would like—murdering his own stories to give him pleasure. His countenance on such occasions was a *rendezvous* of contending emotions, a battlefield of rival forces. Politeness ever prevailed, but it took all his irony and sad philosophy to hide his pain. *Patchwork* is such a good collection of the kind of story he liked best

that it was really difficult to avoid telling him a story that was *not* in it. I made the blunder once myself with a Voltairean anecdote. Here it is as told in *Patchwork*:

> Voltaire was one day listening to a dramatic author reading his comedy, and who said, "Ici le chevalier rit!" He exclaimed: "Le chevalier est *bien* heureux!"

I hope I told it fairly well; he smiled sadly, and said nothing, not even *Et tu, Brute!*

In 1886 Mr. Locker printed for presentation a catalogue of his printed books, manuscripts, autograph letters, drawings, and pictures. Nothing of his own figures in this catalogue, and yet in a very real sense the whole is his. Most of the books are dispersed, but the catalogue remains, not merely as a record of rarities and bibliographical details dear to the collector's heart, but as a token of taste. Just as there is, so Wordsworth reminds us, "a spirit in the woods," so is there still, brooding over and haunting the pages of the "Rowfant Catalogue," the spirit of true connoisseurship. In the slender list of Locker's "Works" this book must always have a place.

Frederick Locker died at Rowfant on May 30th, 1895, leaving behind him, carefully prepared for the press, a volume he had christened *My Confidences: An Autographical Sketch addressed to My Descendants.*

In due course the book appeared, and was misunderstood at first by many. It cut a strange, outlandish figure among the crowd of casual reminiscences it externally resembled. Glancing over the pages of *My Confidences*, the careless library subscriber encountered the usual number

of names of well-known personages, whose appearance is supposed by publishers to add sufficient zest to reminiscences to secure for them a sale large enough, at any rate, to recoup the cost of publication. Yet, despite these names, Mr. Locker's book is completely unlike the modern memoir. Beneath a carefully-constructed, and perhaps slightly artificially maintained, frivolity of tone, the book is written in deadly earnest. Not for nothing did its author choose as one of the mottoes for its title-page, "Ce ne sont mes gestes que j'écrie; c'est moy." It may be said of this book, as of Senancour's *Obermann*:

> A fever in these pages burns;
> Beneath the calm they feign,
> A wounded human spirit turns
> Here on its bed of pain.

The still, small voice of its author whispers through *My Confidences*. Like Montaigne's *Essays*, the book is one of entire good faith, and strangely uncovers a personality.

As a tiny child Locker was thought by his parents to be very like Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture of Puck, an engraving of which was in the home at Greenwich Hospital, and certainly Locker carried to his grave more than a suspicion of what is called Puckishness. In *My Confidences* there are traces of this quality.

Clearly enough the author of *London Lyrics*, the editor of *Lyra Elegantiarum*, of *Patchwork*, and the whimsical but sincere compiler of *My Confidences* was more than a mere connoisseur, however much connoisseurship entered into a character in which taste played so dominant a part.

Stronger even than taste was his almost laborious love of kindness. He really took too much pains about it, exposing himself to rebuffs and misunderstandings; but he was not without his rewards. All down-hearted folk, sorrowful, disappointed people, the unlucky, the ill-considered, the *mésestimés*—those who found themselves condemned to discharge uncongenial duties in unsympathetic society, turned instinctively to Mr. Locker for a consolation, so softly administered that it was hard to say it was intended. He had friends everywhere, in all ranks of life, who found in him an infinity of solace, and for his friends there was nothing he would not do. It seemed as if he could not spare himself. I remember his calling at my chambers one hot day in July, when he happened to have with him some presents he was in course of delivering. Among them I noticed a bust of Voltaire and an unusually lively tortoise, generally half-way out of a paper bag. Wherever he went he found occasion for kindness, and his whimsical adventures would fill a volume. I sometimes thought it would really be worth while to leave off the struggle for existence, and gently to subside into one of Lord Rowton's homes in order to have the pleasure of receiving in my new quarters a first visit from Mr. Locker. How pleasantly would he have mounted the stair, laden with who knows what small gifts?—a box of mignonette for the window-sill, an old book or two, as likely as not a live kitten, for indeed there was never an end to the variety or ingenuity of his offerings! How felicitous would have been his greeting! How cordial his compliments! How abiding the sense

of his unpatronising friendliness! But it was not to be. One can seldom choose one's pleasures.

In his *Patchwork* Mr. Locker quotes Gibbon's encomium on Charles James Fox. Anyone less like Fox than Frederick Locker it might be hard to discover, but fine qualities are alike wherever they are found lodged; and if Fox was as much entitled as Locker to the full benefit of Gibbon's praise, he was indeed a good fellow.

In his tour to Switzerland Mr. Fox gave me two days of free and private society. He seemed to feel and even to envy the happiness of my situation, while I admired the powers of a superior man as they are blended in his character with the softness and simplicity of a child. *Perhaps no human being was ever more perfectly exempted from the taint of malevolence, vanity, and falsehood.*

ACTORS

1884

MOST people, I suppose, at one time or another in their lives, have felt the charm of an actor's life, as they were free to fancy it, well-nigh irresistible.

What is it to be a great actor? I say a great actor, because (I am sure) no amateur ever fancied himself a small one. Is it not always to have the best parts in the best plays; to be the central figure of every group; to feel that attention is arrested the moment you come on the stage; and (more exquisite satisfaction still) to be aware that it is relaxed when you go off; to have silence secured for your smallest utterances; to know that the highest dramatic talent has been exercised to invent situations for the very purpose of giving effect to *your* words and dignity to *your* actions; to quell all opposition by the majesty of your bearing or the brilliancy of your wit; and finally, either to triumph over disaster, or if you be cast in tragedy, happier still, to die upon the stage, supremely pitied and honestly mourned for at least a minute? And then, from first to last, applause loud and long—not postponed, not even delayed, but following immediately after. For a piece of diseased egotism—that is, for a man—what a lot is this!

How pointed, how poignant the contrast between

a hero on the boards and a hero in the streets! In the world's theatre the man who is really playing the leading part—did we but know it—is too often, in the general estimate, accounted but one of the supernumeraries, a figure in dingy attire, who might well be spared, and who may consider himself well paid with a pound a week. *His* utterances procure no silence. He has to pronounce them as best he may, whilst the gallery sucks its orange, the pit pares its nails, the boxes babble, and the stalls yawn. Amidst these pleasant distractions he is lucky if he is heard at all; and perhaps the best thing that can befall him is for somebody to think him worth the trouble of a hiss. As for applause, it may chance with such men, if they live long enough, as it has to the great ones who have preceded them, in their old age,

> When they are frozen up within, and quite
> The phantom of themselves,
> To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
> Which blamed the living man.

The great actor may sink to sleep, soothed by the memory of the tears or laughter he has evoked, and wake to find the day far advanced, whose close is to witness the repetition of his triumph; but the great man will lie tossing and turning as he reflects on the seemingly unequal war he is waging with stupidity and prejudice, and be tempted to exclaim, as Milton tells us he was, with the sad prophet Jeremy: "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me, a man of strife and contention!"

The upshot of all this is, that it is a pleasanter thing to represent greatness than to be great.

But the actor's calling is not only pleasant in itself—it gives pleasure to others. In this respect, how favourably it contrasts with the three learned professions!

Few pleasures are greater than to witness some favourite character, which hitherto has been but vaguely bodied forth by our sluggish imaginations, invested with all the graces of living man or woman. A distinguished man of letters, who years ago was wisely selfish enough to rob the stage of a jewel and set it in his own crown, has addressed to his wife some radiant lines which are often on my lips:

> Beloved, whose life is with mine own entwined,
> In whom, whilst yet thou wert my dream, I viewed,
> Warm with the life of breathing womanhood,
> What Shakespeare's visionary eye divined—
> Pure Imogen; high-hearted Rosalind,
> Kindling with sunshine all the dusk greenwood;
> Or changing with the poet's changing mood,
> Juliet, or Constance of the queenly mind.

But a truce to these compliments.

> I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.

It is idle to shirk disagreeable questions, and the one I have to ask is this, "Has the world been wrong in regarding with disfavour and lack of esteem the great profession of the stage?

That the world, ancient and modern, has despised the actor's profession cannot be denied. An affecting story I read many years ago—in that elegant and entertaining work, Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*—well illustrates the feeling of the Roman world. Julius Decimus Laberius was a Roman knight and dramatic author, famous for his mimes, who had the misfortune to irritate a greater Julius,

the author of the *Commentaries*, when the latter was at the height of his power. Cæsar, casting about how best he might humble his adversary, could think of nothing better than to condemn him to take a leading part in one of his own plays. Laberius entreated in vain. Cæsar was obdurate, and had his way. Laberius played his part—how, Lemprière sayeth not; but he also took his revenge, after the most effectual of all fashions, the literary. He composed and delivered a prologue of considerable power, in which he records the act of spiteful tyranny, and which, oddly enough, is the only specimen of his dramatic art that has come down to us. It contains lines which, though they do not seem to have made Cæsar, who sat smirking in the stalls, blush for himself, make us, 1900 years afterwards, blush for Cæsar. The only lines, however, now relevant are, being interpreted, as follow:

> After having lived sixty years with honour, I left my home this morning a Roman knight, but I shall return to it this evening an infamous stage-player. Alas! I have lived a day too long.

Turning to the modern world, and to England, we find it here the popular belief that actors are by statute rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars. This, it is true, is founded on a misapprehension of the effect of 39 Eliz. chap. 4, which only provides that common players wandering abroad without authority to play, shall be taken to be "rogues and vagabonds"; a distinction which one would have thought was capable of being perceived even by the blunted faculties of the lay mind.[1]

But the fact that the popular belief rests upon

[1] See note at end of Essay.

a misreading of an Act of Parliament three hundred years old does not affect the belief, but only makes it exquisitely English, and as a consequence entirely irrational.

Is there anything to be said in support of this once popular prejudice?

It may, I think, be supported by two kinds of argument. One derived from the nature of the case, the other from the testimony of actors themselves.

A serious objection to an actor's calling is that from its nature it admits of no other test of failure or success than the contemporary opinion of the town. This in itself must go far to rob life of dignity. A Milton may remain majestically indifferent to the "barbarous noise" of "owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs," but the actor can steel himself to no such fortitude. He can lodge no appeal to posterity. The owls must hoot, the cuckoos cry, the apes yell, and the dogs bark on his side, or he is undone. This is of course inevitable, but it is an unfortunate condition of an artist's life.

Again, no record of his art survives to tell his tale or account for his fame. When old gentlemen wax garrulous over actors dead and gone, young gentlemen grow somnolent. Chippendale the cabinet-maker is more potent than Garrick the actor. The vivacity of the latter no longer charms (save in Boswell); the chairs of the former still render rest impossible in a hundred homes.

This, perhaps, is why no man of lofty genius or character has ever condescended to remain an actor. His lot pressed heavily even on so mercurial

a man as David Garrick, who has given utterance to the feeling in lines as good perhaps as any ever written by a successful player:

> The painter's dead, yet still he charms the eye,
> While England lives his fame shall never die;
> But he who struts his hour upon the stage
> Can scarce protract his fame thro' half an age;
> Nor pen nor pencil can the actor save—
> Both art and artist have one common grave.

But the case must be carried farther than this, for the mere fact that a particular pursuit does not hold out any peculiar attractions for soaring spirits will not justify us in calling that pursuit bad names. I therefore proceed to say that the very act of acting, *i.e.*, the art of mimicry, or the representation of feigned emotions called up by sham situations, is, in itself, an occupation an educated man should be slow to adopt as the profession of a life.

I believe — for we should give the world as well as the devil its due—that it is to a feeling, a settled persuasion of this sort, lying deeper than the surface brutalities and snobbishnesses visible to all, that we must attribute the contempt, seemingly so cruel and so ungrateful, the world has visited upon actors.

I am no great admirer of beards, be they never so luxuriant or glossy, yet I own I cannot regard off the stage the closely shaven face of an actor without a feeling of pity, not akin to love. Here, so I cannot help saying to myself, is a man who has adopted a profession whose very first demand upon him is that he should destroy his own identity. It is not what you are, or what by study you may become, but how few obstacles you present to the

getting of yourself up as somebody else, that settles the question of your fitness for the stage. Smoothness of face, mobility of feature, compass of voice—these things, but the toys of other trades, are the tools of this one.

Boswellians will remember the name of Tom Davies as one of frequent occurrence in the great biography. Tom was an actor of some repute, and (so it was said) read *Paradise Lost* better than any man in England. One evening, when Johnson was lounging behind the scenes at Drury (it was, I hope, before his pious resolution to go there no more), Davies made his appearance on his way to the stage in all the majesty and millinery of his part. The situation is picturesque. The great and dingy Reality of the eighteenth century, the Immortal, and the bedizened little player. "Well, Tom," said the great man (and this is the whole story), "well, Tom, and what art thou to-night?" "What art thou to-night?" It may sound rather like a tract, but it will, I think, be found difficult to find an answer to the question consistent with any true view of human dignity.

Our last argument derived from the nature of the case is, that deliberately to set yourself as the occupation of your life to amuse the adult and to astonish, or even to terrify, the infant population of your native land, is to degrade yourself.

Three-fourths of the acted drama is, and always must be, comedy, farce, and burlesque. We are bored to death by the huge inanities of life. We observe with horror that our interest in our dinner becomes languid. We consult our doctor, who simulates an interest in our stale symptoms, and

after a little talk about Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Merriman, prescribes Toole. If we are very innocent we may inquire what night we are to go, but if we do we are at once told that it doesn't in the least matter when we go, for it is always equally funny. Unhappy Toole! to be made up every night as a safe prescription for the blues! To make people laugh is not necessarily a crime, but to adopt as your trade the making people laugh by delivering for a hundred nights together another man's jokes, in a costume the author of the jokes would blush to be seen in, seems to me a somewhat unworthy proceeding on the part of a man of character and talent.

To amuse the British public is a task of herculean difficulty and danger, for the blatant monster is, at times, as whimsical and coy as a maiden, and if it once makes up its mind not to be amused, nothing will shake it. The labour is enormous, the sacrifice beyond what is demanded of saints. And if you succeed, what is your reward? Read the lives of comedians, and closing them, you will see what good reason an actor has for exclaiming with the old-world poet:

Odi profanum vulgus!

We now turn to the testimony of actors themselves.

Shakespeare is, of course, my first witness. There is surely significance in this. "Others abide our question," begins Arnold's fine sonnet on Shakespeare—"others abide our question; thou art free." The little we know about our greatest poet has become a commonplace. It is a striking

tribute to the endless loquacity of man, and a proof how that great creature is not to be deprived of his talk, that he has managed to write quite as much about there being nothing to write about as he could have written about Shakespeare, if the author of *Hamlet* had been as great an egoist as Rousseau. The fact, however, remains that he who has told us most about ourselves, whose genius has made the whole civilised world kin, has told us nothing about himself, except that he hated and despised the stage. To say that he has told us this is not, I think, any exaggeration. I have, of course, in mind the often quoted lines to be found in that sweet treasury of melodious verse and deep feeling, the *Sonnets of Shakespeare*. The one hundred and tenth begins thus:

> Alas! 'tis true I have gone here and there,
> And made myself a motley to the view,
> Gor'd my own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
> Made old offences of affections new.

And the one hundred and eleventh:

> O for my sake do thou with Fortune chide,
> The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means, which public manners breeds.
> Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
> And almost thence my nature is subdued
> To what it works on, like the dyer's hand.
> Pity me, then, and wish I were renewed.

It is not much short of three centuries since those lines were written, but they seem still to bubble with a scorn which may indeed be called immortal.

> Sold cheap what is most dear.

There, compressed in half a line, is the whole case against an actor's calling.

But it may be said Shakespeare was but a poor actor. He could write *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*; but when it came to casting the parts, the Ghost in the one and old Adam in the other were the best he could aspire to. Verbose biographers of Shakespeare, in their dire extremity, and naturally desirous of writing a big book about a big man, have remarked at length that it was highly creditable to Shakespeare that he was not, or at all events that it does not appear that he was, jealous, after the true theatrical tradition, of his more successful brethren of the buskin.

It surely might have occurred, even to a verbose biographer in his direst need, that to have had the wit to write and actually to have written the soliloquies in *Hamlet*, might console a man under heavier afflictions than the knowledge that in the popular estimate somebody else spouted those soliloquies better than he did himself. I can as easily fancy Milton jealous of Tom Davies as Shakespeare of Richard Burbage. But—good, bad, or indifferent—Shakespeare was an actor, and as such I tender his testimony.

I now—for really this matter must be cut short—summon pell-mell all the actors and actresses who have ever strutted their little hour on the stage, and put to them the following comprehensive question: Is there in your midst one who had an honest, hearty, downright pride and pleasure in your calling, or do not you all (tell the truth) mournfully echo the lines of your great master (whom nevertheless you never really cared for), and with him

> Your fortunes chide,
> That did not better for your lives provide
> Than public means, which public manners breeds.

They all assent: with wonderful unanimity.

But, seriously, I know of no recorded exception, unless it be Thomas Betterton, who held the stage for half a century—from 1661 to 1708—and who still lives, as much as an actor can, in the pages of Colley Cibber's *Apology*. He was a man apparently of simple character, for he had only one benefit-night all his life.

Who else is there? Read Macready's *Memoirs*—the King Arthur of the stage. You will find there, I am sorry to say, all the actor's faults—if faults they can be called which seem rather hard necessities, the discolouring of the dyer's hand; greedy hungering after applause, endless egotism, grudging praise—all are there; not perhaps in the tropical luxuriance they have attained elsewhere, but plain enough. But do we not also find, deeply engrained and constant, a sense of degradation, a longing to escape from the stage for ever?

He did not like his children to come and see him act, and was always regretting—heaven help him! —that he wasn't a barrister-at-law. Look upon this picture and on that. Here we have Macbeth, that mighty thane; Hamlet, the intellectual symbol of the whole world of modern thought; Strafford, in Robert Browning's fine play; splendid dresses, crowded theatres, beautiful women, royal audiences; and on the other side, a rusty gown, a musty wig, a fusty court, a deaf judge, an indifferent jury, a dispute about a bill of lading, and ten guineas on your brief—which you have not

been paid, and which you can't recover—why, "'tis Hyperion to a satyr!"

Again, we find Mrs. Siddons writing of her sister's marriage:

"I have lost one of the sweetest companions in the world. She has married a respectable man, though of small fortune. I thank God she is off the stage." What is this but to say, "Better the most humdrum of existences with the most 'respectable of men,' than to be upon the stage"?

The volunteered testimony of actors is both large in bulk and valuable in quality, and it is all on my side.

Their involuntary testimony I pass over lightly. Far be from me the disgusting and ungenerous task of raking up a heap of the weaknesses, vanities and miserablenesses of actors and actresses dead and gone. After life's fitful fever they sleep (I trust) well; and in common candour, it ought never to be forgotten that whilst it has always been the fashion—until one memorable day Mr. Froude ran amuck of it—for biographers to shroud their biographees (the American Minister must bear the brunt of this word on his broad shoulders) in a crape veil of respectability, the records of the stage have been written in another spirit. We always know the worst of an actor, seldom his best. David Garrick was a better man than Lord Eldon, and Macready was at least as good as Dickens.

There is, however, one portion of this body of involuntary testimony on which I must be allowed to rely, for it may be referred to without offence.

Our dramatic literature is our greatest literature. It is the best thing we have done. Dante may overtop Milton, but Shakespeare surpasses both. He is

our finest achievement; his plays our noblest possession; the things in the world most worth thinking about. To live daily in his company, to study his works with minute and loving care—in no spirit of pedantry searching for double endings, but in order to discover their secret, and to make the spoken word tell upon the hearts of man and woman—this might have been expected to produce great intellectual if not moral results.

The most magnificent compliment ever paid by man to woman is undoubtedly Steele's to the Lady Elizabeth Hastings. "To love her," wrote he, "is a liberal education." As much might surely be said of Shakespeare.

But what are the facts—the ugly, hateful facts? Despite this great advantage—this close familiarity with the noblest and best in our literature—the taste of actors, their critical judgment, always has been and still is, if not beneath contempt, at all events far below the average intelligence of their day. By taste, I do not mean taste in flounces and in furbelows, tunics and stockings; but in the weightier matters of the truly sublime and the essentially ridiculous. Salvini's Macbeth is undoubtedly a fine performance; and yet that great actor, as the result of his study, has placed it on record that he thinks the sleep-walking scene ought to be assigned to Macbeth instead of to his wife. Shades of Shakespeare and Siddons, what think you of that?

It is a strange fatality, but a proof of the inherent pettiness of the actor's art, that though it places its votary in the very midst of literary and artistic influences, and of necessity informs him of the best

and worthiest, he is yet, so far as his own culture is concerned, left out in the cold—art's slave, not her child.

What have the devotees of the drama taught us? Nothing! it is we who have taught them. We go first, and they come lumbering after. It was not from the stage the voice arose bidding us recognise the supremacy of Shakespeare's genius? Actors first ignored him, then hideously mutilated him; and though now occasionally compelled, out of deference to the taste of the day, to forgo their green-room traditions, to forswear their Tate and Brady emendations, in their heart of hearts they love him not; and it is with a light step and a smiling face that our great living tragedian flings aside Hamlet's tunic or Shylock's gaberdine to revel in the melodramatic glories of *The Bells* and *The Corsican Brothers*.

Our gratitude is due in this great matter to men of letters, not to actors. If it be asked, "What have actors to do with literature and criticism?" I answer, "Nothing"; and add, "That is my case."

But the notorious bad taste of actors is not entirely due to their living outside Literature, with its words for ever upon their lips, but none of its truths engraven on their hearts. It may partly be accounted for by the fact that for the purposes of an ambitious actor bad plays are the best.

In reading actors' lives, nothing strikes you more than their delight in making a hit in some part nobody ever thought anything of before. Garrick was proud past all endurance of his Beverley in *The Gamester*, and one can easily see why. Until people saw Garrick's Beverley, they didn't think

there was anything in *The Gamester*; nor was there, except what Garrick put there.[1] This is called creating a part, and he is the greatest actor who creates most parts.

But genius in the author of the play is a terrible obstacle in the way of an actor who aspires to identify himself once and for all with the leading part in it. Mr. Irving may act Hamlet well or ill —and, for my part, I think he acts it exceedingly well—but behind Mr. Irving's Hamlet, as behind everybody else's Hamlet, there looms a greater Hamlet than them all—Shakespeare's Hamlet, the real Hamlet.

But Mr. Irving's Mathias is quite another kettle of fish, all of Mr. Irving's own catching. Who ever, on leaving the Lyceum, after seeing *The Bells*, was heard to exclaim, "It is all mighty fine; but that is not my idea of Mathias"? Do not we all feel that without Mr. Irving there could be no Mathias?

We best like doing what we do best: and an actor is not to be blamed for preferring the task of making much of a very little to that of making little of a great deal.

As for actresses, it surely would be the height of ungenerosity to blame a woman for following the only regular profession commanding fame and fortune the kind consideration of man has left

[1] This illustration is not a very happy one, for as an accomplished critic pointed out in the *St. James's Gazette*, Moore's play was written especially for Mr. Garrick, and was first made known to the public by Mr. Garrick. The play was, however, subsequently printed, and to be had of all booksellers; and the observations in the text would therefore hold good of anyone who put off seeing the play until he had read it. But whether there was any person so ill-advised I cannot say.

open to her. For two centuries women have been free to follow this profession, onerous and exacting though it be, and by doing so have won the rapturous applause of generations of men, who are all ready enough to believe that where their pleasure is involved, no risks of life or honour are too great for a woman to run. It is only when the latter, tired of the shams of life, would pursue the realities, that we become alive to the fact—hitherto, I suppose, studiously concealed from us—how frail and feeble a creature she is.

Lastly, it must not be forgotten that we are discussing a question of casuistry, one which is "stuff o' the conscience," and where consequently words are all-important.

Is an actor's calling an eminently worthy one? —that is the question. It may be lawful, useful, delightful; but is it worthy?

An actor's life is an artist's life. No artist, however eminent, has more than one life, or does anything worth doing in that life, unless he is prepared to spend it royally in the service of his art, caring for nought else. Is an actor's art worth the price? I answer, No!

VAGABONDS AND PLAYERS

The Statute Law on this subject is not without interest. Stated shortly it stands thus: By 39 Eliz. c. 4, it was enacted, "That all persons calling themselves Schollers going abroad begging . . . all idle persons using any subtile craft or fayning themselves to have knowledge in Phisiognomye, Palmestry, or other like crafty science; or pretending that they can tell Destyneyes, Fortunes, or such other like fantasticall Ymagynac̃ons; all Fencers, Bearwards, *common players of Interludes and Minstrels wandering abroad* (other than players of Interludes belonging to any Baron of this realm, or any honourable personage of greater degree, to be auctorised to play under

the hand and seale of Arms of such Baron or Personage); all Juglers, Tinkers, Pedlars, and Petty Chapmen wandering abroad . . . shall be taken, adjudged, and deemed Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars, and shall sustain such payne and punyshment as by this Act is in that behalf appointed."

Such "payne and punyshment" was as follows:

"To be stripped naked from the middle upwards, and shall be openly whipped until his or her body be bloudye, and shall be forthwith sent from parish to parish by the officers of every the same the next streghte way to the parish where he was borne. After which whipping the same person shall have a Testimonyall testifying that he has been punyshed according to law."

This statute was repealed by 13 Anne c. 26, which, however, includes within its new scope "common players of Interludes," and names no exceptions. The whipping continues, but there is an alternative in the House of Correction: "to be stript naked from the middle, and be openly whipped until his or her body be bloody, or may be sent to the House of Correction." 17 Geo. II. c. 5 repeals a previous statute of the same king which had repealed the statute of Anne, and provides that "all common players of Interludes and all persons who shall for Hire, Gain, or Reward act, represent, or perform any Interlude, Tragedy, Comedy, Opera, Play, Farce, or other Entertainment of the Stage, not being authorised by law, shall be deemed Rogues and Vagabonds within the true meaning of the Act." The punishment was to be "publicly whipt," or to be sent to the House of Correction. This Act has been repealed, and the law is regulated by 5 Geo. IV. c. 83, which makes no mention of actors, who are therefore now wholly quit of this odious imputation.

ADDITIONAL NOTE, 1922.—This little paper, composed more than half a century ago for the purposes of a debating society, attracted on its publication more attention than it deserved; and seems to have caused annoyance in certain quarters. Sir Henry Irving once rated me soundly for it, and I could only murmur that all men wear the scars of their several professions, and that the Stage has never been very sympathetic towards the Law; and yet all men know that the Law, honourably pursued, is a noble profession, and so with the Stage. But a price has to be paid for everything.

FALSTAFF

1884

BY GEORGE RADFORD

(*See Preface, Vol. I.*)

THERE is more material for a life of Falstaff than for a life of Shakespeare, though for both there is a lamentable dearth. The difficulties of the biographer are, however, different in the two cases. There is nothing, or next to nothing, in Shakespeare's works which throws light on his own story; and such evidence as we have is of the kind called circumstantial. But Falstaff constantly gives us reminiscences or allusions to his earlier life, and his companions also tell us stories which ought to help us in a biography. The evidence, such as it is, is direct; and the only inference we have to draw is that from the statement to the truth of the statement.

It has been justly remarked by Sir James Stephen, that this very inference is perhaps the most difficult one of all to draw correctly. The inference from so-called circumstantial evidence, if you have enough of it, is much surer; for whilst facts cannot lie, witnesses can, and frequently do. The witnesses on whom we have to rely for the facts are Falstaff and his companions—especially Falstaff.

When an old man tries to tell you the story of his youth, he sees the facts through a distorting subjective medium, and gives an impression of his

history and exploits more or less at variance with the bare facts as seen by a contemporary outsider. The scientific Goethe, though truthful enough in the main, certainly fails in his reminiscences to tell a plain unvarnished tale. And Falstaff was *not* habitually truthful. Indeed, that Western American, who wrote affectionately on the tomb of a comrade, "As a truth-crusher he was unrivalled," had probably not given sufficient attention to Falstaff's claims in this matter. Then Falstaff's companions are not witnesses above suspicion. Generally speaking, they lie open to the charge made by P. P. against the wags of his parish, that they were men delighting more in their own conceits than in the truth. These are some of our difficulties, and we ask the reader's indulgence in our endeavours to overcome them. We will tell the story from our hero's birth, and will not begin longer *before* that event than is usual with biographers.

The question, *Where* was Falstaff born? has given us some trouble. We confess to having once entertained a strong opinion that he was a Devonshire man. This opinion was based simply on the flow and fertility of his wit as shown in his conversation, and the rapid and fantastic play of his imagination. But we sought in vain for any verbal provincialisms in support of this theory, and there was something in the character of the man that rather went against it. Still, we clung to the opinion, till we found that philology was against us, and that the Falstaffs unquestionably came from Norfolk.

The name is of Scandinavian origin; and we

find in *Domesday* that a certain Falstaff held freely from the king a church at Stamford. These facts are of great importance. The thirst for which Falstaff was always conspicuous was no doubt inherited—was, in fact, a Scandinavian thirst. The pirates of early English times drank as well as they fought, and their descendants who invade England—now that the war of commerce has superseded the war of conquest—still bring the old thirst with them, as anyone can testify who has enjoyed the hospitality of the London Scandinavian Club. Then this church was no doubt a familiar landmark in the family; and when Falstaff stated, late in life, that if he hadn't forgotten what the inside of a church was like, he was a peppercorn and a brewer's horse, he was thinking with some remorse of the family temple.

Of the family between the Conquest and Falstaff's birth we know nothing, except that, according to Falstaff's statement, he had a grandfather who left him a seal-ring worth forty marks. From this statement we might infer that the ring was an heirloom, and consequently that Falstaff was an eldest son, and the head of his family. But we must be careful in drawing our inferences, for Prince Henry frequently told Falstaff that the ring was copper; and on one occasion, when Falstaff alleged that his pocket had been picked at the *Boar's Head*, and this seal-ring and three or four bonds of forty pounds apiece abstracted, the Prince assessed the total loss at eightpence.

After giving careful attention to the evidence, and particularly to the conduct of Falstaff on the occasion of the alleged robbery, we come to the

conclusion that the ring *was* copper, and was not an heirloom. This leaves us without any information about Falstaff's family prior to his birth. He was born (as he himself informs the Lord Chief Justice) about three o'clock in the afternoon, with a white head and something a round belly. Falstaff's corpulence, therefore, as well as his thirst, was congenital. Let those who are not born with his comfortable figure sigh in vain to attain his stately proportions. This is a thing which Nature gives us at our birth as much as the Scandinavian thirst or the shaping spirit of imagination.

Born somewhere in Norfolk, Falstaff's early months and years were no doubt rich with the promise of his after greatness. We have no record of his infancy, and are tempted to supply the gap with Rabelais' chapters on Gargantua's babyhood. But regard for the truth compels us to add nothing that cannot fairly be deduced from the evidence. We leave the strapping boy in his swaddling-clothes to answer the question *when* he was born. Now, it is to be regretted that Falstaff, who was so precise about the hour of his birth, should not have mentioned the year. On this point we are again left to inference from conflicting statements. We have this distinct point to start from—that Falstaff, in or about the year 1401, gives his age as some fifty or by'r Lady inclining to three-score. It is true that in other places he represents himself as old, and again in another states that he and his accomplices in the Gadshill robbery are in the vaward of their youth. The Chief Justice reproves him for this affectation of youth, and puts a question (which, it is true, elicits no admission from Falstaff)

as to whether every part of him is not blasted with antiquity.

We are inclined to think that Falstaff rather understated his age when he described himself as by'r Lady inclining to three-score, and that we shall not be far wrong if we set down 1340 as the year of his birth. We cannot be certain to a year or two. There is a similar uncertainly about the year of Sir Richard Whittington's birth. But both these great men, whose careers afford in some respects striking contrasts, were born within a few years of the middle of the fourteenth century.

Falstaff's childhood was no doubt spent in Norfolk; and we learn from his own lips that he plucked geese, played truant, and whipped top, and that he did not escape beating. That he had brothers and sisters we know; for he tells us that he is *John* with them and *Sir John* with all Europe. We do not know the dame or pedant who taught his young idea how to shoot and formed his manners; but Falstaff says that *if* his manners became him not, he was a fool that taught them him. This does not throw much light on his early education: for it is not clear that the remark applies to that period, and in any case it is purely hypothetical.

But Falstaff, like so many boys since his time, left his home in the country and came to London. His brothers and sisters he left behind him, and we hear no more of them. Probably none of them ever attained eminence, as there is no record of Falstaff's having attempted to borrow money of them. We know Falstaff so well as a tun of a man, a horse-back-breaker, and so forth, that it is not

easy to form an idea of what he was in his youth. But if we trace back the sack-stained current of his life to the day when, full of wonder and hope, he first rode into London, we shall find him as different from Shakespeare's picture of him as the Thames at Iffley is from the Thames at London Bridge. His figure was shapely; he had no difficulty *then* in seeing his own knee, and if he was not able, as he afterwards asserted, to creep through an alderman's ring, nevertheless he had all the grace and activity of youth. He was just such a lad (to take a description almost contemporary) as the Squier who rode with the Canterbury Pilgrims:

> A lover and a lusty bacheler,
> With lockes crull as they were laid in presse,
> Of twenty yere of age he was, I gesse.
> Of his stature he was of even lengthe,
> And wonderly deliver, and grete of strengthe.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Embrouded was he, as it were a mede,
> All ful of freshe floures, white and rede;
> Singing he was, or floyting alle the day,
> He was as freshe as is the moneth of May.
> Short was his goune, with sleves long and wide,
> Wel coude he sitte on hors, and fayre ride,
> He coulde songes make, and wel endite,
> Just and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and write.
> So hot he loved, that by nightertale
> He slep no more than doth the nightingale.

Such was Falstaff at the age of twenty, or something earlier, when he entered at Clement's Inn, where were many other young men reading law, and preparing for their call to the Bar. How much law he read it is impossible now to ascertain. That he had, in later life, a considerable knowledge of the subject is clear, but this may have been acquired like Mr. Micawber's, by experience,

as defendant on civil process. We are inclined to think he read but little. *Amici fures temporis*: and he had many friends at Clement's Inn who were not smugs, nor, indeed, reading men in any sense. There was John Doit of Staffordshire, and Black George Barnes, and Francis Pickbone, and Will Squele, a Cotswold man, and Robert Shallow from Gloucestershire. Four of these were such swingebucklers as were not to be found again in all the Inns o' Court, and we have it on the authority of Justice Shallow that Falstaff was a good backswordsman, and that before he had done growing he broke the head of Skogan at the Court gate. This Skogan appears to have been Court-jester to Edward III. No doubt the natural rivalry between the amateur and the professional caused the quarrel, and Skogan must have been a good man if he escaped with a broken head only, and without damage to his reputation as a professional wit. The same day that Falstaff did this deed of daring —the only one of the kind recorded of him— Shallow fought with Sampson Stockfish, a fruiterer, behind Gray's Inn. Shallow was a gay dog in his youth, according to his own account: he was called Mad Shallow, Lusty Shallow—indeed, he was called anything. He played Sir Dagonet in Arthur's show at Mile End Green; and no doubt Falstaff and the rest of the set were cast for other parts in the same pageant. These tall fellows of Clement's Inn kept well together, for they liked each other's company, and they needed each other's help in a row in Turnbull Street or elsewhere. Their watchword was "Hem, boys!" and they made the old Strand ring with their songs as they strolled

home to their chambers of an evening. They heard the chimes at midnight—which, it must be confessed, does not seem to us a desperately dissipated entertainment. But midnight was a late hour in those days. The paralytic masher of the present day, who is most alive at midnight, rises at noon. *Then* the day began earlier with a long morning, followed by a pleasant period called the forenoon. Under modern conditions we spend the morning in bed, and to palliate our sloth call the forenoon and most of the rest of the day the morning. These young men of Clement's Inn were a lively, not to say a rowdy, set. They would do anything that led to mirth or mischief. What passed when they lay all night in the windmill in St. George's Field we do not quite know; but we are safe in assuming that they did not go there to pursue their legal duties, or to grind corn. Anyhow, forty years after, that night raised pleasant memories.

John Falstaff was the life and centre of this set, as Robert Shallow was the butt of it. The latter had few personal attractions. According to Falstaff's portrait of him, he looked like a man made after supper of a cheese-paring. When he was naked he was for all the world like a forked radish, with a head fantastically carved upon it with a knife; he was so forlorn that his dimensions to any thick sight were invincible: he was the very genius of famine; and a certain section of his friends called him mandrake: he came ever in the rearward of the fashion, and sung those tunes to the over-scutched huswives that he heard the carmen whistle, and sware they were his fancies or his good-nights. Then he had the honour of having

his head burst by John o' Gaunt, for crowding among the Marshal's men in the Tilt-yard, and this was matter for continual gibe from Falstaff and the other boys. Falstaff was in the van of the fashion, was witty himself without being at that time the cause that wit was in others. No one could come within range of his wit without being attracted and overpowered. Late in life Falstaff deplores nothing so much in the character of Prince John of Lancaster as this, that a man cannot make him laugh. He felt this defect in the Prince's character keenly, for laughter was Falstaff's familiar spirit, which never failed to come at his call. It was by laughter that young Falstaff fascinated his friends and ruled over them. There are only left to us a few scraps of his conversation, and these have been, and will be to all time, the delight of all good men. The Clement's Inn boys who enjoyed the feast, of which we have but the crumbs left to us, were happy almost beyond the lot of man. For there is more in laughter than is allowed by the austere, or generally recognised by the jovial. By laughter man is distinguished from the beasts, but the cares and sorrows of life have all but deprived man of this distinguishing grace, and degraded him to a brutal solemnity. Then comes (alas, how rarely!) a genius such as Falstaff's, which restores the power of laughter and transforms the stolid brute into man. This genius approaches nearly to the divine power of creation, and we may truly say, "Some for less were deified." It is no marvel that young Falstaff's friends assiduously served the deity who gave them this good gift. At first he was satisfied with the mere exercise

of his genial power, but he afterwards made it serviceable to him. It was but just that he should receive tribute from those who were beholden to him for a pleasure which no other could confer.

It was now that Falstaff began to recognise what a precious gift was his congenital Scandinavian thirst, and to lose no opportunity of gratifying it. We have his mature views on education, and we may take them as an example of the general truth that old men habitually advise a young one to shape the conduct of his life after their own. Rightly to apprehend the virtues of sherris-sack is the first qualification in an instructor of youth. "If I had a thousand sons," says he, "the first humane principles I would teach them should be to forswear thin potations, and to addict themselves to sack"; and further: "There's never none of these demure boys come to any proof; for their drink doth so over-cool their blood, and making many fish-meals, that they fall into a kind of male green sickness; and then when they marry they get wenches: they are generally fools and cowards, which some of us should be too but for inflammation." There can be no doubt that Falstaff did not in early life over-cool his blood, but addicted himself to sack, and gave the subject a great part of his attention for all the remainder of his days.

It may be that he found the subject too absorbing to allow of his giving much attention to old Father Antic the Law. At any rate, he was never called to the Bar, and posterity cannot be too thankful that his great mind was not lost in "the abyss of legal eminence" which has received so

many men who might have adorned their country That he was fitted for a brilliant legal career can admit of no doubt. His power of detecting analogies in cases apparently different, his triumphant handling of cases apparently hopeless, his wonderful readiness in reply, and his dramatic instinct, would have made him a powerful advocate. It may have been owing to difficulties with the Benchers of the period over questions of discipline, or it may have been a distaste for the profession itself, which induced him to throw up the law and adopt the profession of arms.

We know that while he was still at Clement's Inn he was page to Lord Thomas Mowbray, who was afterwards created Earl of Nottingham and Duke of Norfolk. It must be admitted that here (as elsewhere in Shakespeare) there is some little chronological difficulty. We will not inquire too curiously, but simply accept the testimony of Justice Shallow on the point. Mowbray was an able and ambitious lord, and Falstaff, as page to him, began his military career with every advantage. The French wars of the later years of Edward III. gave frequent and abundant opportunity for distinction. Mowbray distinguished himself in Court and in camp, and we should like to believe that Falstaff was in the sea-fight when Mowbray defeated the French fleet and captured vast quantities of sack from the enemy. Unfortunately, there is no record whatever of Falstaff's early military career, and beyond his own ejaculation, "Would to God that my name was not so terrible to the enemy as it is!" and the (possible) inference from it that he must have made his name terrible

in some way, we have no evidence that he was ever in the field before the battle of Shrewsbury. Indeed, the absence of evidence on this matter goes strongly to prove the negative. Falstaff boasts of his valour, his alacrity, and other qualities which were not apparent to the casual observer, but he never boasts of his services in battle. If there had been anything of the kind to which he could refer with complacency, there is no moral doubt that he would have mentioned it freely, adding such embellishments and circumstances as he well knew how.

In the absence of evidence as to the course of life, we are left to conjecture how he spent the forty years, more or less, between the time of his studies at Clement's Inn and the day when Shakespeare introduces him to us. We have no doubt that he spent all, or nearly all, this time in London. His habits were such as are formed by life in a great city: his conversation betrays a man who has lived, as it were, in a crowd, and the busy haunts of men were the appropriate scene for the display of his great qualities. London, even then, was a great city, and the study of it might well absorb a lifetime. Falstaff knew it well, from the Court, with which he always preserved a connection, to the numerous taverns where he met his friends and eluded his creditors. The *Boar's Head* in Eastcheap was his headquarters, and, like Barnabee's, two centuries later, his journeys were from tavern to tavern; and, like Barnabee, he might say "Multum bibi, nunquam pransi." To begin with, no doubt the dinner bore a fair proportion to the fluid which accompanied it, but by degrees the liquor encroached on and superseded the viands,

until his tavern bills took the shape of the one purloined by Prince Henry, in which there was but one halfpennyworth of bread to an intolerable deal of sack. It was this inordinate consumption of sack (and not sighing and grief, as he suggests) which blew him up like a bladder. A life of leisure in London always had, and still has, its temptations. Falstaff's means were described by the Chief Justice of Henry IV. as very slender, but this was after they had been wasted for years. Originally they were more ample, and gave him the opportunity of living at ease with his friends. No domestic cares disturbed the even tenor of his life. Bardolph says he was better accommodated than with a wife. Like many another man about town, he thought about settling down when he was getting up in years. He weekly swore, so he tells us, to marry old Mistress Ursula, but this was only after he saw the first white hair on his chin. But he never led Mistress Ursula to the altar. The only other women for whom he formed an early attachment were Mistress Quickly, the hostess of the *Boar's Head*, and Doll Tearsheet, who is described by the page as a proper gentlewoman, and a kinswoman of his master's. There is no denying that Falstaff was on terms of intimacy with Mistress Quickly, but he never admitted that he made her an offer of marriage. She, however, asserted it in the strongest terms and with a wealth of circumstance.

We must transcribe her story:

> Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin-chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire, upon Wednesday in Whitsun-Week, when the Prince broke thy head for liking his father to a singing-man of Windsor;

thou didst swear to me then, as I was washing thy wound, to marry me, and make me my lady thy wife. Canst thou deny it? Did not goodwife Keech, the butcher's wife, come in then, and call me Gossip Quickly? coming in to borrow a mess of vinegar; telling us she had a good dish of prawns; whereby thou didst desire to eat some; whereby I told thee they were ill for a green wound? And didst thou not, when she was gone downstairs, desire me to be no more so familiarity with such poor people; saying ere long they should call me madam? And didst thou not kiss me, and bid me fetch thee thirty shillings? I put thee now to thy book-oath; deny it if thou canst!

We feel no doubt that if Mistress Quickly had given this evidence in action for breach of promise of marriage, and goodwife Keech corroborated it, the jury would have found a verdict for the plaintiff, unless indeed they brought in a special verdict to the effect that Falstaff made the promise, but never intended to keep it. But Mistress Quickly contented herself with upbraiding Falstaff, and he cajoled her with his usual skill, and borrowed more money of her.

Falstaff's attachment for Doll Tearsheet lasted many years, but did not lead to matrimony. From the Clement's Inn days till he was three-score he lived in London celibate, and his habits and amusements were much like those of other single gentlemen about town of his time, or, for that matter, of ours. He had only himself to care for, and he cared for himself well. Like his page, he had a good angel about him, but the devil outbid him. He was as virtuously given as other folk, but perhaps the devil had a handle for temptation in that congenital thirst of his. He was a social spirit too, and he tells us that company, villainous company, was the spoil of him. He was less than thirty when he took the faithful Bardolph into his

service, and only just past that age when he made the acquaintance of the nimble Poins. Before he was forty he became the constant guest of Mistress Quickly. Pistol and Nym were later acquisitions, and the Prince did not come upon the scene till Falstaff was an old man and knighted.

There is some doubt as to when he obtained this honour. Richard II. bestowed titles in so lavish a manner as to cause discontent among many who didn't receive them. In 1377, immediately on his accession, the earldom of Nottingham was given to Thomas Mowbray, and on the same day three other earls and nine knights were created. We have not been able to discover the names of these knights, but we confidently expect to unearth them some day, and to find the name of Sir John Falstaff among them. We have already stated that Falstaff had done no service in the field at this time, so he could not have earned his title in that manner. No doubt he got it through the influence of Mowbray, who was in a position to get good things for his friends as well as for himself. It was but a poor acknowledgment for the inestimable benefit of occasionally talking with Falstaff over a quart of sack.

We will not pursue Falstaff's life further than this. It can from this point be easily collected. It is a thankless task to paraphrase a great and familiar text. To attempt to tell the story in better words than Shakespeare would occur to no one but Miss Braddon, who has epitomised Sir Walter, or to Canon Farrar, who has elongated the Gospels. But we feel bound to add a few words as to character. There are, we fear, a number of people who

regard Falstaff as a worthless fellow, and who would refrain (if they could) from laughing at his jests. These people do not understand his claim to grateful and affectionate regard. He did more to produce that mental condition of which laughter is the expression than any man who ever lived. But for the cheering presence of him, and men like him, this vale of tears would be a more terrible dwelling-place than it is. In short, Falstaff has done an immense deal to alleviate misery and promote positive happiness. What more can be said of your heroes and philanthropists?

It is, perhaps, characteristic of this commercial age that benevolence should be always associated, if not considered synonymous, with the giving of money. But this is clearly mistaken, for we have to consider what effect the money given produces on the minds and bodies of human beings. Sir Richard Whittington was an eminently benevolent man, and spent his money freely for the good of his fellow-citizens. (We sincerely hope, by the way, that he lent some of it to Falstaff without security.) He endowed hospitals and other charities. Hundreds were relived by his gifts, and thousands (perhaps) are now in receipt of his alms. This is well. Let the sick and the poor, who enjoy his hospitality and receive his doles, bless his memory. But how much wider and further-reaching is the influence of Falstaff! Those who enjoy his good things are not only the poor and the sick, but all who speak the English language. Nay, more; translation has made him the inheritance of the world, and the benefactor of the entire human race.

It may be, however, that some other nations fail

fully to understand and appreciate the mirth and the character of the man. A Dr. G. G. Gervinus, of Heidelberg, has written, in the German language, a heavy work on Shakespeare, in which he attacks Falstaff in a very solemn and determined manner, and particularly charges him with selfishness and want of conscience. We are inclined to set down this malignant attack to envy. Falstaff is the author and cause of universal laughter. Dr. Gervinus will never be the cause of anything universal; but, so far as his influence extends, he produces headaches. It is probably a painful sense of this contrast that goads on the author of headaches to attack the author of laughter.

But is there anything in the charge? We do not claim anything like perfection, or even saintliness, for Falstaff. But we may say of him, as Byron says of Venice, that his very vices are of the gentler sort. And as for this charge of selfishness and want of conscience, we think that the words of Bardolph on his master's death are an overwhelming answer to it. Bardolph said, on hearing the news: "I would I were with him wheresover he is: whether he be in heaven or hell." Bardolph was a mere serving-man, not of the highest sensibility, and he for thirty years knew his master as his valet knows the hero. Surely the man who could draw such an expression of feeling from his rough servant is not the man to be lightly charged with selfishness! Which of us can hope for such an epitaph, not from a hireling, but from our nearest and dearest? Does Dr. Gervinus know anyone who will make such a reply to a posthumous charge against him of dullness and lack of humour?

A ROGUE'S MEMOIRS

1884

ONE is often tempted of the devil to forswear the study of history altogether as the pursuit of the Unknowable. "How is it possible," he whispers in our ear, as we stand gloomily regarding the portly calf-bound volumes without which no gentleman's library is complete, "how is it possible to suppose that you have there, on your shelves, the actual facts of history—a true record of what men, dead long ago, felt and thought?" Yet, if we have not, I for one, though of a literary turn, would sooner spent my leisure playing skittles with boors than in reading sonorous lies in stout volumes.

It is not so much [wilily insinuates the Tempter] that these renowned authors lack knowledge. Their habit of giving an occasional reference (though the verification of these is usually left to the malignancy of a rival and less popular historian) argues at least some reading. No; what is wanting is ignorance, carefully acquired and studiously maintained. This is no paradox. To carry the truisms, theories, laws, language of to-day, along with you in your historical pursuits, is to turn the muse of history upside down—a most disrespectful proceeding—and yet to ignore them—to forget all about them—to hang them up with your hat and coat in the hall, to remain there whilst you sit in the library composing your immortal work, which is so happily to combine all that is best in Gibbon and Macaulay—a sneerless Gibbon and an impartial Macaulay—is a task which, if it be not impossible is, at all events, of huge difficulty.

Another blemish in English historical work has been noticed by the Rev. Charles Kingsley, and may therefore be referred to by me without offence. Your standard historians, having

no unnatural regard for their most indefatigable readers, the wives and daughters of England, feel it incumbent upon them to pass over, as unfit for dainty ears and dulcet tones, facts, and rumours of facts, which none the less often determined events by stirring the strong feelings of your ancestors, whose conduct, unless explained by this light, must remain enigmatical.

When, to these anachronisms of thought and omissions of fact, you have added the dishonesty of the partisan historian and the false glamour of the picturesque one, you will be so good as to proceed to find the present value of history!

Thus far the Enemy of Mankind:

An admirable lady orator is reported lately to have "brought down" Exeter Hall by observing, "in a low but penetrating voice," that the devil was a very stupid person. It is true that Ben Jonson is on the side of the lady, but I am far too orthodox to entertain any such opinion; and though I have, in this instance of history, so far resisted him as to have refrained from sending my standard historians to the auction mart—where, indeed, with the almost single exception of Mr. Grote's *History of Greece* (the octavo edition in twelve volumes), prices rule so low as to make cartage a consideration—I have still of late found myself turning off the turnpike of history to loiter down the primrose paths of men's memoirs of themselves and their times.

Here at least, so we argue, we are comparatively safe. Anachronisms of thought are impossible; omissions out of regard for female posterity unlikely, and as for party spirit, if found, it forms part of what lawyers call the *res gestæ*, and has therefore a value of its own. Against the perils of the picturesque, who will insure us?

But when we have said all this, and, sick of prosing, would begin reading, the number of really

readable memoirs is soon found to be but few. This is, indeed, unfortunate; for it launches us off on another prose-journey by provoking the question, What makes memoirs interesting?

Is it necessary that they should be the record of a noble character? Certainly not. We remember Pepys, who—well, never mind what he does. We call to mind Cellini; *he* runs behind a fellow-creature, and with "admirable address" sticks a dagger in the nape of his neck, and long afterwards records the fact, almost with reverence, in his life's story. Can anything be more revolting than some portions of the revelation Benjamin Franklin was pleased to make of himself in writing? And what about Rousseau? Yet, when we have pleaded guilty for these men, a modern Savonarola, who had persuaded us to make a bonfire of their works, would do well to keep a sharp look-out, lest at the last moment we should be found substituting *Pearson on the Creed* for Pepys, Coleridge's *Friend* for Cellini, John Foster's *Essays* for Franklin, and Roget's *Bridgewater Treatise* for Rousseau.

Neither will it do to suppose that the interest of a memoir depends on its writer having been concerned in great affairs, or lived in stirring times. The dullest memoirs written even in English, and not excepting those maimed records of life known as "religious biography," are the work of men of the "attaché" order, who, having been mixed up in events which the newspapers of the day chronicled as "Important Intelligence," were not unnaturally led to cherish the belief that people would like to have from their pens full, true and particular accounts of all that then happened, or, as they,

if moderns, would probably prefer to say, transpired. But the World, whatever an over-bold Exeter Hall may say of her old associate the Devil, is not a stupid person, and declines to be taken in twice; and turning a deaf ear to the most painstaking and trustworthy accounts of deceased Cabinets and silenced Conferences, goes journeying along her broad way, chuckling over some old joke in Boswell, and reading with fresh delight the all-about-nothing letters of Cowper and Lamb.

How then does a man—be he good or bad—big or little—a philosopher or a fribble—St. Paul or Horace Walpole—make his memoirs interesting?

To say that the one thing needful is individuality, is not quite enough. To be an individual is the inevitable, and in most cases the unenviable, lot of every child of Adam. Each one of us has, like a tin soldier, a stand of his own. To have an individuality is no sort of distinction, but to be able to make it felt in writing is not only distinction but under favouring circumstances immortality.

Have we not all some correspondents, though probably but few, from whom we never receive a letter without feeling sure that we shall find inside the envelope something written that will make us either glow with the warmth or shiver with the cold of our correspondent's life? But how many other people are to be found, good, honest people too, who no sooner take pen in hand than they stamp unreality on every word they write. It is a hard fate, but they cannot escape it. They may be as literal as the late Earl Stanhope, as painstaking as Bishop Stubbs, as much in earnest as the Prime Minister—their lives may be

noble, their aims high, but no sooner do they seek to narrate to us their story, than we find it is not to be. To hearken to them is past praying for. We turn from them as from a guest who has outstayed his welcome. Their writing wearies, irritates, disgusts.

Here then, at last, we have the two classes of memoir writers—those who manage to make themselves felt, and those who do not. Of the latter, a very little is a great deal too much—of the former we can never have enough.

What a liar was Benvenuto Cellini!—who can believe a word he says? To hang a dog on his oath would be a judicial murder. Yet when we lay down his *Memoirs* and let our thoughts travel back to those far-off days he tells us of, there we see him standing, in bold relief, against the black sky of the past, the very man he was. Not more surely did he, with that rare skill of his, stamp the image of Clement VII. on the papal currency than he did the impress of his own singular personality upon every word he spoke and every sentence he wrote.

We ought, of course, to hate him, but do we? A murderer he has written himself down. A liar he stands self-convicted of being. Were anyone in the nether world bold enough to call him thief, it may be doubted whether Rhadamanthus would award him the damages for which we may be certain he would loudly clamour. Why do we not hate him? Listen to him:

> Upon my uttering these words, there was a general outcry, the noblemen affirming that I promised too much. But one of them, who was a great philosopher, said in my favour,

"From the admirable symmetry of shape and happy physiognomy of this young man, I venture to engage that he will perform all he promises, and more." The Pope replied, "I am of the same opinion"; then calling Trajano, his gentleman of the bed-chamber, he ordered him to fetch me five hundred ducats.

And so it always ended; suspicions, aroused most reasonably, allayed most unreasonably, and then—ducats. He deserved hanging, but he died in his bed. He wrote his own memoirs after a fashion that ought to have brought posthumous justice upon him, and made them a literary gibbet, on which he should swing, a creaking horror, for all time; but nothing of the sort has happened. The rascal is so symmetrical, and his physiognomy, as it gleams upon us through the centuries, so happy, that we cannot withhold our ducats, though we may accompany the gift with a shower of abuse.

This only proves the profundity of an observation made by Mr. Bagehot—a man who carried away into the next world more originality of thought than is now to be found in the Three Estates of the Realm. Whilst remarking upon the extraordinary reputation of the late Francis Horner and the trifling cost he was put to in supporting it, Mr. Bagehot said that it proved the advantage of "keeping an atmosphere."

The common air of heaven sharpens men's judgments. Poor Horner, but for that kept atmosphere of his, always surrounding him, would have been bluntly asked, "What he had done since he was breeched," and in reply he could only have muttered something about the currency. As for our especial rogue Cellini, the question would probably have assumed this shape: "Rascal, name the crime

you have not committed, and account for the omission."

But these awkward questions are not put to the lucky people who keep their own atmospheres. The critics, before they can get at them, have to step out of the everyday air, where only achievements count and the Decalogue still goes for something, into the kept atmosphere, which they have no sooner breathed than they begin to see things differently, and to measure the object thus surrounded with a tape of its own manufacture. Horner—poor, ugly, a man neither of words nor deeds—becomes one of our great men; a nation mourns his loss and erects his statue in the Abbey. Mr. Bagehot gives several instances of the same kind, but he does not mention Cellini, who is, however, in his own way, an admirable example.

You open his book—a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Lying indeed! Why, you hate prevarication. As for murder, your friends know you too well to mention the subject in your hearing, except in immediate connection with capital punishment. You are, of course, willing to make some allowance for Cellini's time and place—the first half of the sixteenth century and Italy. "Yes," you remark, "Cellini shall have strict justice at my hands." So you say as you settle yourself in your chair and begin to read. We seem to hear the rascal laughing in his grave. His spirit breathes upon you from his book—peeps at you roguishly as you turn the pages. His atmosphere surrounds you; you smile when you ought to frown, chuckle when you should groan, and—O final triumph!—laugh

aloud when, if you had a rag of principle left, you would fling the book into the fire. Your poor moral sense turns away with a sigh, and patiently awaits the conclusion of the second volume.

How cautiously does he begin, how gently does he win your ear by his seductive piety! I quote from Mr. Roscoe's translation:

> It is a duty incumbent on upright and credible men of all ranks, who have performed anything noble or praiseworthy, to record, in their own writing, the events of their lives; yet they should not commence this honourable task before they have passed their fortieth year. Such, at least, is my opinion, now that I have completed my fifty-eighth year, and am settled in Florence, where, considering the numerous ills that constantly attend human life, I perceive that I have never before been so free from vexations and calamities, or possessed of so great a share of content and health as at this period. Looking back on some delightful and happy events of my life, and on many misfortunes so truly overwhelming that the appalling retrospect makes me wonder how I have reached this age in vigour and prosperity, through God's goodness, I have resolved to publish an account of my life; and . . . I must, in commencing my narrative, satisfy the public on some few points to which its curiosity is usually directed; the first of which is to ascertain whether a man is descended from a virtuous and ancient family. . . . I shall therefore now proceed to inform the reader how it pleased God that I should come into the world.

So you read on page 1; what you read on page 191 is this:

> Just after sunset, about eight o'clock, as this musqueteer stood at his door with his sword in his hand, when he had done supper, I with great address came close up to him with a long dagger, and gave him a violent back-handed stroke, which I aimed at his neck. He instantly turned round, and the blow, falling directly upon his left shoulder, broke the whole bone of it; upon which he dropped his sword, quite overcome by the pain, and took to his heels. I pursued, and in four steps came up with him, when, raising the dagger over his head, which he lowered down, I hit him exactly upon the nape of the neck. The weapon penetrated so deep that, though I made a great effort to recover it again, I found it impossible.

So much for murder. Now for manslaughter, or rather Cellini's notion of manslaughter.

Pompeo entered an apothecary's shop at the corner of the Chiavica, about some business, and stayed there for some time. I was told he had boasted of having bullied me, but it turned out a fatal adventure to him. Just as I arrived at that quarter he was coming out of the shop, and his bravoes, having made an opening, formed a circle round him. I thereupon clapped my hand to a sharp dagger, and having forced my way through the file of ruffians, laid hold of him by the throat, so quickly and with such presence of mind, that there was not one of his friends could defend him. I pulled him towards me to give him a blow in front, but he turned his face about through excess of terror, so that I wounded him exactly under the ear; and upon repeating my blow he fell down dead. It had never been my intention to kill him, but blows are not always under command.

We must all feel that it would never have done to have begun with these passages, but long before the 191st page has been reached Cellini has retreated into his own atmosphere, and the scales of justice have been hopelessly tampered with.

That such a man as this encountered suffering in the course of his life, should be matter for satisfaction to every well-regulated mind; but, somehow or another, you find yourself pitying the fellow as he narrates the hardships he endured in the Castle of S. Angelo. He is so symmetrical a rascal! Just hear him! listen to what he says well on in the second volume, after the little incidents already quoted:

Having at length recovered my strength and vigour, after I had composed myself and resumed my cheerfulness of mind, I continued to read my Bible, and so accustomed my eyes to that darkness, that though I was at first able to read only an hour and a half, I could at length read three hours. I then reflected on the wonderful power of the Almighty upon the hearts of simple men, who had carried their enthusiasm so far as to believe firmly that God would indulge them in all

they wished for; and I promised myself the assistance of the Most High, as well through His mercy as on account of my innocence. Thus turning constantly to the Supreme Being, sometimes in prayer, sometimes in silent meditation on the divine goodness, I was totally engrossed by these heavenly reflections, and came to take such delight in pious meditations that I no longer thought of past misfortunes. On the contrary, I was all day long singing psalms and many other compositions of mine, in which I celebrated and praised the Deity.

Thus torn from their context, these passages may seem to supply the best possible falsification of the previous statement that Cellini told the truth about himself. Judged by these passages alone, he may appear a hypocrite of an unusually odious description. But it is only necessary to read his book to dispel that notion. He tells lies about other people; he repeats long conversations, sounding his own praises, during which, as his own narrative shows, he was not present; he exaggerates his own exploits, his sufferings—even, it may be, his crimes; but when we lay down his book, we feel we are saying good-bye to a man whom we know.

He has introduced himself to us, and though doubtless we prefer saints to sinners, we may be forgiven for liking the company of a live rogue better than that of the lay-figures and empty clock-cases labelled with distinguished names, who are to be found doing duty for men in the works of our standard historians. What would we not give to know Julius Cæsar one half as well as we know this outrageous rascal? The saints of the earth, too, how shadowy they are! Which of them do we really know? Excepting one or two ancient and modern Quietists, there is hardly one amongst the whole number who being dead yet speaketh.

Their memoirs far too often only reveal to us a hazy something, certainly not recognisable as a man. This is generally the fault of their editors, who, though men themselves, confine their editorial duties to going up and down the diaries and papers of the departed saint, and obliterating all human touches. This they do for the "better prevention of scandals"; and one cannot deny that they attain their end, though they pay dearly for it.

I shall never forget the start I gave when, on reading some old book about India, I came across an after-dinner jest of Henry Martyn's. The thought of Henry Martyn laughing over the walnuts and the wine was almost, as Robert Browning's unknown painter says, "too wildly dear"; and to this day I cannot help thinking that there must be a mistake somewhere.

To return to Cellini, and to conclude. On laying down his *Memoirs*, let us be careful to recall our banished moral sense, and make peace with her, by passing a final judgment on this desperate sinner, which perhaps, after all, we cannot do better than by employing language of his own concerning a monk, a fellow-prisoner of his, who never, so far as appears, murdered anybody, but of whom Cellini none the less felt himself entitled to say:

> I admired his shining qualities, but his odious vices I freely censured and held in abhorrence.

THE REFORMATION

1892

LONG ago an eminent Professor of International Law at the University of Cambridge, lecturing his class, spoke somewhat disparagingly of the Reformation as compared with the Renaissance, and regretted there was no adequate history of the glorious events called by the latter name. So keenly indeed did the Professor[1] feel this gap in his library, that he proceeded to say that inconvenient as it had been to him to lecture at Cambridge that afternoon, still if what he had said should induce any member of the class to write a history of the Renaissance worthy to be mentioned with the masterpiece of Gibbon, he (the Professor) would never again think it right to refer to the inconvenience he had personally been put to in the matter.

It must be twenty years since these words were uttered. The class to whom they were addressed is scattered far and wide, even as the household referred to in the touching poem of Mrs. Hemans. No one of them has written a history of the Renaissance. It is now well-nigh certain no one of them ever will. Looking back over those twenty years it seems a pity it was never attempted. As Owen Meredith sweetly sings:

> And it all seems now in the waste of life
> Such a very little thing.

But it has remained undone. Regrets are vain.

[1] The late Sir William Harcourt.

For my part, I will make bold to say that the Professor was all wrong. Professors do not stand where they did. They have been blown upon. The ugliest gap in an Englishman's library is in the shelf which ought to contain, but does not, a history of the Reformation of Religion in his own country. It is a subject made for an Englishman's hand. At present it is but (to employ some old-fashioned words) a hotch-potch, a gallimaufry, a confused mingle-mangle of divers things jumbled or put together. Puritan and Papist, Anglican and Erastian, pull out what they choose, and drop whatever they do not like with a grimace of humorous disgust. What faces the early Tractarians used to pull over Bishop Jewel! How Dr. Maitland delighted in exhibiting the boundless vulgarity of the Puritan party! Lord Macaulay had only a paragraph or two to spare for the Reformation; but as we note amongst the contents of his first chapter the following heads: "The Reformation and its Effects," "Origin of the Church of England," "Her Peculiar Character," we do not need to be further reminded of the views of that arch-Erastian.

It is time someone put a stop to this "help yourself" procedure. What is needed to do this is a long, luminous, leisurely history, written by somebody who, though wholly engrossed by his subject, is yet absolutely indifferent to it.

The great want at present is of common knowledge; common, that is, to all parties. The Catholic tells his story, which is much the most interesting one, sure of his audience. The Protestant falls back upon his Foxe, and relights the fires of

Smithfield with entire self-satisfaction. The Erastian flourishes his Acts of Parliament in the face of the Anglican, who burrows like a cony in the rolls of Convocation. Each is familiar with one set of facts, and shrinks nervously from the honour of an introduction to a totally new set. We are not going to change our old "*mumpsimus*" for anybody's new "*sumpsimus*." But we must some day, and we shall when this new history gets itself written.

The subject cannot be said to lack charm. Border lands, marches, passes are always romantic. No bagman can cross the Tweed without emotion. The wanderer on the Malvern Hills soon learns to turn his eyes from the dull eastward plain to where they can be feasted on the dim outlines of wild Wales. Border periods of history have something of the same charm. How the old thing ceased to be? How the new thing became what it is? How the old colours faded, and the old learning disappeared, and the Church of Edward the Confessor, and St. Thomas of Canterbury, and William of Wykeham, became the Church of George the Third, Archbishop Tait, and Dean Stanley? There is surely a tale to be told. Something must have happened at the Reformation. Somebody was dispossessed. The common people no longer heard "the blessed mutter of the Mass," nor saw "God made and eaten all day long." Ancient services ceased, old customs were disregarded, familiar words began to go out of fashion. The Reformation meant something. On these points the Catholics entertain no kind of doubt. That they suffered ejectment they tearfully admit. Nor, to do them

justice, have they ever acquiesced in the wrong they allege was then done them, or exhibited the faintest admiration for the intruder.

> Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
> My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
> Have ye beheld his chariot foam'd along
> By noble winged creatures he hath made?
> I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
> With such a glow of beauty in his eyes
> That it enforced me to bid sad farewell
> To all my empire.

This has never been the attitude or the language of the Roman Church towards the Anglican. "Canterbury has gone its way, and York is gone, and Durham is gone, and Winchester is gone. It was sore to part with them." So spoke Dr. Newman on a memorable occasion. His distress would have been no greater had the venerable buildings to which he alluded been in the possession of the Baptists.

But against this view must be set the one represented by the somewhat boisterous Church of Englandism of Dean Hook, who ever maintained that all the Church did at the Reformation was to wash her dirty face, and that consequently she underwent only an external and not a corporate change during the process.

There are thousands of pious souls to whom the question, What happened at the Reformation? is of supreme importance; and yet there is no history of the period written by a "kinless loon," whose own personal indifference to Church Authority shall be as great as his passion for facts, his love of adventures and biography, and his taste for theology.

In the meantime, and pending the production of the immortal work, it is pleasant to notice that annually the historian's task is being made easier. Books are being published, and old manuscripts edited and printed, which will greatly assist the good man, and enable him to write his book by his own fireside. The Catholics have been very active of late years. They have shaken off their shyness and reserve, and however reluctant they still may be to allow their creeds to be overhauled and their rites curtailed by strangers, they have at least come with their histories in their hands and invited criticism. The labours of Father Morris of the Society of Jesus, and of the late Father Knox of the London Oratory, greatly lighten and adorn the path of the student who loves to be told what happened long ago, not in order that he may know how to cast his vote at the next election, but simply because it so happened, and for no other reason whatsoever.

Father Knox's name has just been brought before the world, not, it is to be hoped, for the last time, by the publication of a small book, partly his, but chiefly the work of the Rev. T. E. Bridgett, entitled *The True Story of the Catholic Hierarchy Deposed by Queen Elizabeth, with Fuller Memoirs of its Two Last Survivors* (Burns and Oates).

The book was much wanted. When Queen Mary died, on the 17th of November, 1558, the dioceses of Oxford, Salisbury, Bangor, Gloucester, and Hereford were vacant. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Reginald Pole, died a few hours after his royal relative; and the Bishops of Ro-

chester, Norwich, Chichester, and Bristol did not long survive her. It thus happened that at the opening of 1559 there were only sixteen bishops on the bench. What became of them? The book I have just mentioned answers this deeply interesting question.

One of them, Oglethorpe of Carlisle, was induced to crown the Queen, which service was, however, performed according to the Roman ceremonial, and included the Unction, the Pontifical Mass, and the Communion; but when the oath prescribed by the Act of Supremacy was tendered to the bishops, they all, with one exception, Kitchen of Llandaff, declined to take it, and their depositions followed in due course, though at different dates, during the year 1559. They were, in plain English, turned out, and their places given to others.

A whole hierarchy turned a-begging like this might have been a very startling thing—but it does not seem to have been so. There was no Ambrose amongst the bishops. The mob showed no disposition to rescue Bonner from the Marshalsea. The Queen called them "a set of lazy scamps." This was hard measure. The reverend authors of the book before me call them "confessors," which they certainly were. But there is something disappointing and non-apostolic about them. They none of them came to violent ends. What did happen to them?

The classical passage recording their fortunes occurs in Lord Burghley's *Execution of Justice in England*, which appeared in 1583. His lordship in a good-tempered vein runs through the list of the deposed bishops one by one, and says in substance,

and in a style not unlike Lord John Russell's, that the only hardship put upon them was their removal "from their ecclesiastical offices, which they would not exercise according to law." For the rest, they were "for a great time retained in bishops' houses in very civil and courteous manner, without charge to themselves or their friends, until the time the Pope began, by his Bulls and messages, to offer trouble to the realm by stirring of rebellion"; then, Burghley admits, some of them were removed to more quiet places, but still without being "called to any capital or bloody question."

In this view historians have pretty generally acquiesced. Camden speaks of Tunstall of Durham dying at Lambeth "in free custody"—a happy phrase which may be recommended to those of Her Majesty's subjects in Ireland who find themselves in prison under a statute of Edward III., not for doing anything, but for refusing to say they will not do it again. Even that most erudite and delightful of English Catholics, Charles Butler, who is one of the pleasantest memories of Lincoln's Inn, made but little of the sufferings of these bishops, whilst some Protestant writers have thought it quite amazing they were not all burnt as heretics. "There were no retaliatory burnings," says Canon Perry regretfully. But this surely is carrying Anglican assurance to an extraordinary pitch. What were they to be burnt for? You are burnt for heresy. That is right enough. No one would complain of that. But who in the year 1559 would have been bold enough to declare that the Archbishop of York was a heretic for refusing an oath

prescribed by an Act of the Queen of the same year? Why, even now, after three centuries and a quarter of possession, I suppose Lord Selborne would hesitate before burning the Archbishop of Westminster as a heretic. Hanging is a different matter. It is very easy to get hanged—but to be burnt requires a combination of circumstances not always forthcoming. Canon Perry should have remembered this.

These deposed bishops were neither burnt nor hanged. The aged Tunstall of Durham, who had played a very shabby part in Henry's time, died, where he was bound to die, in his bed, very shortly after his deposition; so also did the Bishops of Lichfield and Coventry, St. David's, Carlisle, and Winchester. Dr. Scott of Chester, after four years in the Fleet prison, managed to escape to Belgium, where he died in 1565. Dr. Pate of Worcester, who was a Council of Trent man, spent three years in the Tower, and then contrived to slip away unobserved. Dr. Poole of Peterborough was never in prison at all, but was allowed to live in retirement in the neighbourhood of London till his death in 1568. Bishop Bonner was kept a close prisoner in the Marshalsea till his death in 1569. He was not popular in London. As he had burnt about one hundred and twenty persons, this need not surprise us. Bishop Bourne of Bath and Wells was lodged in the Tower from June 1560 to the autumn of 1563, when, the plague breaking out, he was quartered on the new Bishop of Lincoln, who had to provide him with bed and board till May 1566, after which date the ex-bishop was allowed to be at large till his death in 1569. The

Bishop of Exeter was kept in the Tower for three years. What subsequently became of him is not known. He is supposed to have lived in the country. Bishop Thirlby of Ely, after three years in the Tower, lived for eleven years with Archbishop Parker, uncomfortably enough, without Confession or Mass. Then he died. It is not to be supposed that Parker ever told his prisoner that they both belonged to the same Church. Dr. Heath, the Archbishop of York, survived his deprivation twenty years, three only of which were spent in prison. He was a man of more mark than most of his brethren, and had defended the Papal supremacy with power and dignity in his place in Parliament. The Queen, who had a liking for him, was very anxious to secure his presence at some of the new offices, but he would never go, summing up his objections thus: "Whatever is contrary to the Catholic faith is heresy, whatever is contrary to Unity is schism." On getting out of the Tower, Dr. Heath, who had a private estate, lived upon it till his death. Dr. Watson of Lincoln was the most learned and the worst treated of the deposed bishops. He was in the Tower and the Marshalsea, with short intervals, from 1559 to 1577, when he was handed over to the custody of the Bishop of Winchester, who passed him on, after eighteen months, to his brother of Rochester, from whose charge he was removed to join other prisoners in Wisbeach Castle, where very queer things happened. Watson died at Wisbeach in 1584. There was now but one bishop left, the by no means heroic Goldwell of St. Asaph's, who in June 1559 proceeded in disguise to the sea-coast, and crossed over to

the Continent without being recognised. He continued to live abroad for the rest of his days, which ended on the 3rd of April, 1585. With him the ancient hierarchy ceased to exist. That, at least, is the assertion of the reverend authors of the book referred to. There are those who maintain the contrary.

WHAT, THEN, DID HAPPEN AT THE REFORMATION?

1902

WHAT happened at the English Reformation? is a question which seems by common consent of scholars to be carried over to a general and still unsettled account. Hardly a student who is not by faith or profession a partisan is to be found ready with an answer. Yet there does exist on this subject, as indeed on most subjects, a popular opinion, and it was therefore a piece of rather poor affectation of the Archbishop of Canterbury's[1] the other day to appear surprised at the notion being abroad that Anne Boleyn had anything to do with the Reformation, and to proceed, as he did, to pour gentle ridicule on the proposition that what then happened was serious enough to break the continuity of English Church history. The Archbishop must know that these errors, if errors they be, are widely spread throughout the commonalty. How should it be otherwise? Ordinary unleisured folk, who have not the Lambeth Library at their elbows, have to pick up their scanty scraps of historical information as best they can from such common and possibly tainted sources as hearsay and popular histories, and the information they thus acquire assures them that the Church of Parker and Laud, and

[1] Dr. Benson.

Tillotson and Tait, is not the Church of Warham and Morton, and Becket and Anselm. Lord Macaulay's *History*, like *Pickwick*, is a book of great repute and wide circulation. The historical accuracy of both works may be challenged, but to ignore their influence is absurd. The great body of our literature, our poetry, our drama, our history, is and has been ever since the Reformation broadly, almost brutally, Protestant, and has proceeded on the assumption that what happened at the Reformation was not only rupture with Rome and the Begging Friars (of whom our pre-Reformation literature is so disagreeably full), but a resettlement of religion on a new footing. If it was not, most grievously for the last three hundred years has the public ear been abused. To disabuse the public mind, to Catholicise John Bull, will prove a task of huge difficulty, and demand a bolder front and a far more vigorous dialectic than Dr. Benson seems prepared either to exhibit or to employ.

A serious difficulty in the way of the Anglican party is the considerable and daily increasing hold on the popular imagination that has of late years been obtained by the Roman Catholics. Englishmen are ever prone to flatter a fallen foe, and there is much that is touching and forlorn in the spectacle of an English Roman Catholic no longer able to adore his risen Lord in any one of those stately Mother Churches built by the piety and still instinct with the genius of his ancestors, or to hear within their walls the tinkle of that bell, a sound carrying with it a richer freight of religious association than any other sound or incident of Christian worship.

Dr. Lingard's *History of England*, though not

so widely read as Macaulay's still is, or as Hume's once was, enjoys a great reputation; and it would, I think, be safe to assert that for one non-Roman Catholic Englishman who is acquainted with the Anglican presentation of the Reformation there are hundreds who are familiar (in its main outline) with the Roman Catholic presentation of the same series of events.

It is by biography and scraps of story about interesting people that historical tradition is chiefly kept alive in the breasts of the vulgar, and it so happens that no Anglican saint or hero has as yet obtained any hold upon the popular imagination; whilst on the Roman side Sir Thomas More, for example, is a universal favourite, and the story of his being led to death for denying the religious supremacy of a monarch to whom he was personally attached is one of the best known in English history. The fate of John Fisher excites the compassion of many who are not in the habit of calling him "Blessed John Fisher," but on the other hand to mourn the execution, cruel as it was, of Archbishop Laud is to belong to a coterie.

The fact is that most people have not left room enough in their minds for the Anglican view, which, old as it is and excellent as it is, and well supported as it may be, is yet for (to use John Locke's convenient phrase) "the bulk of mankind" a new view. Protestants we know, and Papists we know, but who are you?

This difficulty, serious as it is (the sooner it is faced the better), will be got over, and more time will shortly be occupied with the question, "What

happened at the Reformation?" than is likely to please the fine gentlemen who are quite willing to be called members of the Church of England, and to be married and buried (when their time comes) according to her rites, but who, save as aforesaid, busily absent themselves from her services, ridicule her pretensions to supernatural gifts, and would (can we doubt it?) lustily denounce their Mother Church for an impertinent hussy were she to attempt to submit them to that religious discipline they so often so sorely need.

The importance of the question can hardly be overstated, involving as it does for many minds the gravest consequences; for should it appear probable that what happened at the Reformation was a breach of the visible unity of the Church, those men the peace of whose minds is bound up with visible unity must seek that unity elsewhere.

When we remember, and it is difficult long to forget, the intellectual incapacity of nearly all of us, our melancholy inability to fix our attention upon any subject for a lengthened period of time, how soon we grow tired, how quickly a judicial attitude of mind becomes irksome to us, and how quick we are to abandon it altogether, and once more to give our passions, prejudices, and predilections the free play they so dearly love; and whilst we ruefully call to mind under what a mass of documents, pamphlets, sermons, liturgies, Acts of Parliament and of Convocation the history of the Reformation lies buried, and all the Canons and Councils of the Church by which, when the history is ascertained, it must be judged, it is sorrowful to reflect that the peace of mind of a

single soul should be stretched upon the rack of an inquiry which must necessarily prove a protracted one. But how can it be avoided? The matter does not lie beyond the province of private judgment. There is (*ex hypothesi*) no Church authority to which an appeal can safely be made. No use asking the Bishop of Rome what he thinks of the Reformation. The Greek Church cannot be got to take any interest in the matter. Historians! their name is Perfidy! Unless they have good styles they are so hard to read, and if they have good styles they are so apt to lie. By what means shall a plain man—a busy man, a man very partially educated—make up his mind what happened at the Reformation?

How do we ever make up our minds about anything? I can only suppose that it is by a mixed process of rejection and concentration. We reject a whole host of surrounding matters, not because we deliberately consider them irrelevant, but because, for one reason or another, they are alien both to our likes and our dislikes—they leave us unmoved; whilst other men, differently constituted, brought up in other surroundings—in a different library, for example—may find amongst the considerations we disregard the motive power of their resolutions. And as we reject what does not move us, so we concentrate ourselves on what does, and thus is the battlefield selected. Each one of us has his own. The contest over, we stand committed to one side or the other. We seldom repeat the process. The brick once hardened in the sun, the mould is thrown away, and the shape remains for ever determined.

I suppose it is because we know how men come by their opinions that we are so little oppressed by authority in such matters. No Protestant is shaken in his protestation merely because the wisest and best man he has ever known has joined the Roman communion. The sturdy Nonconformists who so bravely rallied round Mr. Gladstone, and were proud to account him their great chief and never wearied of extolling his wisdom and goodness, were yet accustomed when in their teacups to chirp merrily over his Anglicanisms, and seldom paid him the compliment of reading his *Church Principles*. For the things he cared most about they care nothing. There is something terrible in men's indifference to the religious and philosophical opinions of their friends.

But though man may not be a speculative animal, he has got to speculate. He may do it badly, but it has to be done. Our children, if not our august selves, will make up their minds what happened at the Reformation, and my suggestion is that they will do so in a majority of cases, not by any elaborate or exhaustive process of research and reasoning, but by concentrating their attention upon what will seem to them most important.

And especially will they bend their minds upon the Mass. The English Church before the Reformation celebrated the Mass after the same fashion, though not in identical language, as it has to-day been celebrated in Notre-Dame of Paris. Has the English Church as a Church since the Reformation continued to celebrate the Mass after the same fashion and with the same intention as she did

before? If "Yes," to the ordinary British layman the quarrel with the Pope, even the ban of the Pope and his foreign cardinals, will seem but one of those matters to which it is so easy to give the slip. Our quarrel with the Pope is of respectable antiquity—France, too, had hers. But if "No," the same ordinary layman will be puzzled, and, if he has a leaning to sacraments and the sacramental theory of religion and nature, will grow distraught.

Nobody nowadays, save a handful of vulgar fanatics, speaks irreverently of the Mass. If the Incarnation be indeed the one Divine event to which the whole creation moves, the miracle of the altar may well seem its restful shadow cast over a dry and thirsty land for the help of man, who is apt to be discouraged if perpetually told that everything really important and interesting happened, once for all, long ago in a chill historic past.

However much there may be that is repulsive to many minds in ecclesiastical millinery and matters—and it is not only the merriment of parsons that is often found mighty offensive—it is doubtful whether any poor sinful child of Adam (not being a paid agent of the Protestant Alliance) ever witnessed, however ignorantly, and it may be with only the languid curiosity of a traveller, the Communion Service according to the Roman Catholic ritual without emotion. It is the Mass that matters; it is the Mass that makes the difference, so hard to define, so subtle is it, yet so perceptible, between a Catholic country and a Protestant one, between Dublin and Edinburgh, between Havre and Cromer.

Here, I believe, is one of the battlefields of the future.

An earlier question, which goes, no doubt, to the root of the matter, the validity of the Anglican Orders, will not, so I conjecture, so much vex the minds of the laity. Englishmen are slow to give up at the bidding of a foreigner any trapping they are told they have got. The canonical consecration of Parker is denied by some Romanists, but in the opinion of most people it holds water. The story of the sham consecration at the Nag's Head is as vulgar a falsehood as the scandal about Pope Joan. There *was* a luncheon at the Nag's Head, St. Paul's Churchyard, for which, as Heylin tells us, "Parker paid the shot"; but then there always was a luncheon at the Nag's Head on such-like occasions—the licensed victualler saw to that —Reformation or no Reformation. But to suppose that Parker, who was a good bit of an antiquary and desperately nervous (being well aware that he was crossing a stream), should have been indifferent to his own "succession," is absurd. Bishop Barlow, the consecrator, though a married man and a terrible time-server, was canonically as much a bishop as the Pope himself; and so, too, was Hodgkins, the suffragan Bishop of Bedford, who also laid hands on Parker. The other assisting bishops, Scory and Miles Coverdale, were Edwardian bishops consecrated by the altered rite. Roman Catholic writers are not always quite candid in their references to Parker's consecration, for though it is open to them to maintain that the *intention* of the consecrating bishops was not of such a kind as could convey the succession, they

ought not to continue to cast doubts on the surrounding circumstances.

Passing over this earlier and general question as one not so likely to weigh very heavily on lay minds, attention is sure to be fixed on four points relating to the Mass. First, the actual changes in the rite itself; second, the changes made in the Ordination Service of the clergy; third, the general intention of the parties to the change and the general effect of their actions; and, fourth, the teaching and declarations of the Church of England since the Reformation.

The first of these points need not, in these days of cheap reprints, public libraries, and, better still, of second-hand bookshops, present difficulty to anybody who is *mediocriter doctus*. Such a person can compare for himself the Roman Missal with the two Liturgies of King Edward the Sixth and with the Book of Common Prayer, as now in use in our churches.[1]

The sound view to take of the successive revisions, alterations, and omissions of and in our English liturgies is, I presume, that which was expressed by that good Churchman and sound lawyer, Lord Hatherley, in the course of the judgment of the Privy Council in the famous case of Sheppard *v.* Bennett:

> Changes by which words or passages inculcating particular doctrines or assuming a belief in them have been struck out

[1] The most useful collection of ancient and modern liturgies for the ordinary layman is that compiled by Dr. Brett, the non-juror bishop, and published in 1720. It is easily obtained, either in the original edition or in the reprint of 1838. A short statement of the contents of the Eastern and Western Liturgies, so far as they are concerned with the Christian Sacrifice, may be found in Moehler's *Symbolism*, vol. i., note *B*.

are most material as evidence that the Church has deliberately ceased to affirm these doctrines in her public services. At the same time, it is material to observe that the necessary effect of such changes when they stand alone is that it ceases to be unlawful to contradict such doctrines, and not that it becomes unlawful to maintain them. In the public or common prayers and devotional offices of the Church, all her members are expected and entitled to join; it is necessary, therefore, that such forms of worship as are presented by authority for general use should embody those beliefs only which are assumed to be generally held by members of the Church.[1]

The differences between the Canon of the Mass according to the usage of Sarum (before the Reformation) and the First Liturgy of Edward the Sixth may be conveniently studied in Canon Estcourt's well-known book, *The Question of Anglican Ordinations Discussed* (Burns and Oates, 1873), pp. 292–320, where the two services are printed side by side. According to Canon Estcourt (no doubt a partisan writer), whilst the framework of the Mass was retained by the First Liturgy, "every expression which implies a real and proper sacrifice has been carefully weeded"; but in a matter of this sort nothing can supersede the necessity of personal examination.

The two Liturgies of Edward the Sixth (1549 and 1552) notoriously differ, and these differences have been discussed over and over again. Dr. Cardwell, in his well-known edition (Oxford, 1838), printed these Liturgies side by side. The First Liturgy contained a prayer for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine, and a prayer of oblation which, said Dr. Cardwell, "together with the form of words addressed to the communicants, were designed to represent a sacrifice

[1] *Law Reports, Privy Council Appeals*, p. iv., 403.

and appeared to undiscriminating minds to denote the sacrifice of the Mass."

Bishop Gardiner, a well-instructed theologian (though, if the author of the treatise *De Vera Obedientia*, no mere Pope's man), is reported to have stated that he had no quarrel with the First Liturgy, which he pronounced "not far distant from the Catholic Faith," but for the Second Liturgy he had nothing to say.

There are some differences between the Second Liturgy and the Service as settled by Queen Elizabeth and the one now in use.

The second point—namely, the changes made in the Anglican rite of ordination of its clergy—bears upon the subject in this way: It is argued both by Roman Catholics and by Evangelicals (if I may use that term merely for convenience) that the successive alterations made in the old rite in 1549, 1552 and 1562 show at least such an ambiguity of purpose, so many mutilations and weakenings at critical places, as are enough when their general effect is considered to make it impossible to believe that the altered rite includes within its spiritual scope and intention the special and supernatural gifts of grace (including the consecration of the elements), which, so Catholics assert, have from the beginning been given in sacred ordination. In Dr. Lee's book on the *Validity of Anglican Orders*, and in Canon Estcourt's work already referred to, the means are supplied of, at all events, apprehending the nature of the controversy.

The third point, the *general* intention of the parties making these changes, involves an amount

of judicial research and careful examination of such a mass of material, not all easily laid hands on, as to place it as much above the intellectual capacity of the laity as it would prove to be beyond the pecuniary resources of the majority of the clergy. Clergy and laity alike must wait till the work is done for them by someone they can trust.

The fourth point—namely, the teaching of the Church herself upon the nature of this Sacrament—is the one with which the laity will naturally most concern itself.

At the time of the Reformation the doctrine of the pre-Reformation Church was Transubstantiation, and to dispute this doctrine, as Wycliffe did, was commonly regarded by English Churchmen as heretical. The first formal declaration that Transubstantiation was the doctrine of the Church was made at the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, though a century and a half earlier a Pope in Council had condemned as heretical opinions practically identical with those of our Reformers on the subject. The Council of Constance (1415) repeated the declaration of the Fourth Lateran, whilst the Council of Trent, 1551, confirmed and settled Transubstantiation as being the doctrine of the Church.[1]

On this point, and on this point only, the Reformers spoke no uncertain sound. With Transub-

[1] Quoniam autem Christus, redemptor noster, corpus suum id, quod sub specie panis offerebat, vere esse dixit: ideo persuasum semper in ecclesia Dei fuit, idque nunc denuo sancta hæc synodus declarat, per consecrationem panis et vini, conversionem fieri totius substantiæ panis in substantiam corporis Christi Domini nostri, et totius substantiæ vini in substantiam sanguinis ejus. Quæ conversio convenienter et proprie a sancta catholica ecclesia transubstantiatio est appellata (*Concil. Trid.*, Sess. xiii., c. 14).

stantiation the Church of England (as soon as Henry VIII. came to an end) would have nothing whatever to do; it was repudiated alike by Puritan and High Churchman. The twenty-eighth Article of Religion denies it in set terms, and boldly declares it to be repugnant to the plain words of Scripture. No English clergyman can allege a corporeal presence of the natural Body of Christ in the elements, or that the Body of Christ is present in a corporeal or natural manner, without not only disobeying the Privy Council (no great matter), but without disturbing and greatly discrediting the whole Elizabethan settlement, and thereby gravely endangering the carefully-constructed and nationally-attractive Laudian doctrine of the spiritual authority of the English Church as such.

The last section of the Twenty-eighth Article, which declares that the Eucharist was not by Christ's ordinance *reserved*, *carried about*, *lifted up*, or *worshipped* (all acts of piety and devotion intimately associated with the daily religious life of thousands of persons in the days of "the old religion"), and the general tenor of the Thirty-first Article, which asserts that the offering of Christ was finished upon the Cross, and that the sacrifices of the Masses, in the which it was commonly said that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead to have remission of pain or guilt, "were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits," make it plain, what no student will deny, that the Eucharist, its nature and character and effect, were vital points of controversy between the parties.

Not only the Reformers but the Laudian divines

were bitter opponents of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, denouncing it as materialistic and even gross. Cosin and, at a later date, Leslie, writing with the freedom of their times, were not afraid of employing very gross images and figures of speech to make plain their aversion to the doctrine. How far this objection still presses it will be curious to discover. The Incarnation, the Sacrifice of the Cross, have a materialistic aspect, and ill-conditioned writers of our own and other times have used with regard to these mysteries language as offensive, but not more so than that applied by Cosin and Leslie to the doctrine of the Roman Church as to the corporeal presence in the consecrated elements.

But too great reliance must not be placed upon the Articles, which only serve to champ the clergy. No layman is required to subscribe to them, unless it be at King's College, London. Their perusal may afford an occasional distraction from a sermon our inattention is pleased to call dull, but such an acquaintance seldom ripens into knowledge. Besides, there is a growing indisposition to pin the Church of England, a great institution with a strong hold on the nation, down to the dead language of her Articles. So great a latitude of interpretation has already been so freely conceded that it would be foolish to refuse a little more if demanded. The Reformers were not inspired, nor is it now ever suggested that they were in any sense the favourites of heaven. They negotiated a compromise, they settled the terms of a "consent-order," of which the Articles are only a part, and it all happened three centuries ago. Pious laymen

will never consent to have the means of grace doled out to them by decayed equity draughtsmen, or, worse still, successful mercantile lawyers, even with an Archbishop thrown in, sitting in the Privy Council, or to take their religious privileges, strained drop by drop, through the contradictory propositions of sixteenth-century divines in great difficulties.

What the pious and well-disposed laity of the twentieth century will require to be told is, not what Cranmer thought about the Mass, or what Parker thought about it, or what Cosin or even Waterland thought about it, or what Dr. Pusey thought about it, but what says the living Church of to-day on the subject of the Mass. Has the disappearance of the Host from the common daily religious life of Protestant England for three hundred years and more any significance, or has it not? That it was a change affecting our literature, our life, our national position, is plain, but was it more than a purification of doctrine, and did it amount to a change of attitude and mind?[1]

We know how those who are popularly called Protestants or ultra-Protestants will answer this question. We know how Roman Catholics answer it. "Canterbury has gone its way," cried Dr. Newman at Oscott, "York is gone, Durham is gone, Winchester is gone. It was sore to part with them." Amidst these voices is that of the Church of England alone to be dumb, or to be heard but in the essays and sermons of brilliant but irresponsible divines?

[1] "The laying so great a stress on Transubstantiation I have long regarded as the great calamity or error of the Reformation: if not constrained by circumstances, the great *error*; or if constrained, the great *calamity*."—S. T. COLERIDGE. (See *Anima Poetæ*, p. 306.)

It will be a mere waste of time to concoct rival lists, even though those lists be called *catenas*, of divines, and to set them quoting one against the other. It was well enough in the Tractarian days to fill pages with extracts from Bull and Bramhall and Thorndike and Jackson and the rest, because Churchmen then needed to be taught that before the black days of Hoadly and Warburton and Paley there were in the English Church divines of another calibre, doctors of quite a different divinity. It was a great work to do, and splendidly has it been done. The High Church case is now admitted. The stream of Church tradition has trickled down to us along two distinct channels, which at times (one or the other of them) have been well-nigh choked up; but the streams have never ceased to flow, and still are they flowing side by side. High views and low views, sacraments and services, altars and tables, priests and ministers, mysteries and no mysteries, regeneration and no regeneration, presence and no presence, are they not still to be found in that branch of God's visible Church which a distinguished advocate in the Court of Arches once pronounced to be the most learned, the freest, the most rational Church in the world? Abana and Pharpar were, I have no doubt, prodigious noble streams, contrasting most pleasantly one with the other, and affording every variety of bathing accommodation. The great, perhaps the only, merit of Jordan was its unity.

So far as the Anglican High Church clergy are concerned, though conjecture is always rash, the balance of power seems to have shifted in their

favour. If one takes up to-day the letters and sermons of Dr. Pusey, published *circa* 1839–1842, and observes their tone, which is that of a man in a minority pleading for a great cause which he recognises may prove a lost cause, and then glances over the high divinity now current amongst the clergy, and notices how jaunty it has become, how well satisfied it is with its position and its prospects, this conclusion is forced upon you. But clerical opinion and lay opinion are two very different things, and owing to the extraordinary and (I think) most discreditable disinclination of the laity to speak out their minds on theology, it would probably be impossible even for the best informed of Churchmen to hazard a conjecture as to the preponderance on one side or the other of the opinions on matters of faith and doctrine of the regularly communicating and well-instructed members of the Church of England.

But a Church which does not, when the time comes for her to do so, affirm positively and synodically her faith, is a Church in fetters, and if her bondage continues for centuries becomes a Church forsaken. One recalls the awe-struck manner in which Mr. Gladstone in his *Church Principles* (1840) refers to Hoadly, and reminds his readers how Hoadly was a bishop of the Anglican branch of the visible Church for fifty years. Mr. Gladstone also quotes some "fatal words" of poor Archdeacon Paley's. But Hoadly has now lain in his splendid tomb at Winchester for more than a hundred years, and Paley is now of no more account as a divine than the inimitable author of *Tristram Shandy*, whose sermons were

at one time as widely read as his love-letters. A great tree is not to be condemned because a strange or even an obscene bird or two have occasionally found lodging amongst her branches and pecked holes in her bark. And, after all, the heaviest blow dealt the Church of England in her character of Witness of the Faith was not dealt by Hoadly or any eighteenth-century man, but in the year 1850, which is, I think, the date of the Gorham case.

The eighteenth century, with all her splendid achievements, her great battles and her great books, is at an end, and, indeed, her feverish and inconsequent successor has both feet in the grave. The question is, What will be the status and authority of the Church of England in the twentieth century?

Mr. Matthew Arnold, in one of his interesting letters, makes it a matter of complaint against Lord Salisbury that he affects scientific pursuits as matters of investigation and proof, and scientific theology as matter of creed. This did not at all jump with Mr. Arnold's humour, but the probability is that the man of the twentieth century will share more of Lord Salisbury's prejudices than of Mr. Arnold's. It does not follow that he will share Lord Salisbury's opinions, but it may well be that he will resemble him in his belief that Christianity without dogmas, precise and well defined, is more like a nervous complaint than a positive religion.

It is the just boast of the English Church that it is based upon the divine right of episcopacy; her old chamber-fellow the King, whose similar right she once espoused, having disappeared at

the time of the revolution in 1688, and, not having been heard of since 1745, must now be presumed to be dead. Episcopacy as practised by the English Church is anti-Papal. This is nowhere pointed out with greater vivacity than by Leslie in more than one part of his charming writings, and it is referred to by way of objection by Moehler, who remarks:

> If the episcopacy is to form a corporation outwardly as well as inwardly bound together in order to unite all believers in one harmonious life, which the Catholic Church so urgently requires, it stands in need of a centre where all may be held together and firmly connected. What a helpless, shapeless mass, incapable of all combined action, would the Catholic Church not have been, spread as she is over all parts of the world, had she been possessed of no head, no supreme bishop revered by all![1]

Papal infallibility is not an attractive doctrine to the English mind, but a dumb Church also presents difficulties.

In the diocesan system, which is the English system, a Churchman, whether cleric or lay, owes canonical obedience to his own diocesan only. No other bishop or archbishop has any authority over him. The excellent Law (even if he had not been a non-juror) was within his rights in tearing the unhappy Hoadly to pieces in those famous letters, for Hoadly was not Law's diocesan; but on the other hand, Newman at once stopped his tracts when the Bishop of Oxford besought him to do so.

But here, again, the laity are likely to prove restive. Discipline is one thing, faith and doctrine quite another. It would be childish to hold that in the diocese of Lincoln the consecrated elements become the Body and Blood of Christ (though not

[1] Moehler's *Symbolism*, vol. ii., p. 74.

by way of substitution), whilst in the diocese of Liverpool the Holy Communion is regarded but as a Commemorative Service. We know this is not so. There are English churches in Liverpool where the Real Presence on the altar is daily affirmed and (as an act of private devotion) adored, and I have no doubt that in the diocese of Lincoln there are still churches where the Rev. Hugh McNeile (could he be restored to life) might honestly administer the rite.

Differences of opinion amongst bishops are of importance because of their diocesan authority, and because they are, with few exceptions, the only Churchmen who are in the habit of making declarations of faith in intelligible language. From time to time in their addresses to their clergy they deal with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and in such a way as to make it quite plain that their lordships differ with one another on the subject as widely as do the lower clergy. The bishops, who are the fathers and governors of the Church, are not agreed as to what is on the altars of the Church after the priest has pronounced the words of the service in use since the reign of Elizabeth.

Transubstantiation is not primitive doctrine, and very probably Purgatory is not; but, on the other hand, primitive doctrine does not mean indefinite doctrine, still less permissive and optional doctrine.

How long can any Church allow its fathers and its faithful laity to be at large on such a subject? Already the rift is so great as to present to the observer some of the ordinary indications of

sectarianism. Pious Church folk of one way of thinking cannot bring themselves to attend the churches devoted to the other way. In the selection of summer quarters it has long become important to ascertain beforehand the doctrines espoused, and, as a consequence of such doctrines, the ritual maintained by the local clergy. This is not a matter of mere preference, as a Roman Catholic may prefer the Oratorians to the Jesuits; it is, if traced to its source, traceable to the altar. In some churches "of the English obedience" there purports to be the visible sacrifice; in other churches of the same ostensible communion no such profession of mystery or miracle is made.

It is impossible to believe that a mystery so tremendous, so profoundly attractive, so intimately associated with the keystone of the Christian Faith, so vouched for by the testimony of saints, can be allowed to remain for another hundred years an open question in a Church which still asserts herself to be the Guardian of the Faith.

If the inquiry, What happened at the Reformation? were to establish the belief that the English Church did then in mind and will cut herself off from further participation in the Mass as a sacrifice, it will be difficult for most people to resist the conclusion that a change so great broke the continuity of English Church history, effected a transfer of Church property from one body to another, and that from thenceforth the new Church of England has been exposed to influences and has been required to submit to conditions of existence totally incompatible with any working definition of either Church authority or Church discipline.

THE ELIZABETHAN SETTLEMENT[1]

1920

THAT restless crew (of whom I am one) who are, for one reason or another, feverishly interested in trying to find out, as best they can, having themselves no access to the Vatican archives, what really did happen in England at the Reformation, and are never weary, though often disgusted with that great drama, will pounce upon this book of Father Pollen's with eagerness and peruse its pages with avidity.

The character of the author stands so high for honesty of purpose and historical straightforwardness, no less than for learning and industry, that even the most determined of Protestants, if only he is in love with the facts of the case, need be under no secret apprehension whilst reading this book, though its Preface is dated from "Farm Street."

It is, no doubt, written from what I will call, being anxious to avoid giving offence as long as possible, the Roman Catholic point of view. Had it *seemed* to be otherwise suspicion must at once have been roused. Each one of us has of necessity (like a tin soldier) a stand of his own, from which

[1] *The English Catholics in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth : A Study of their Politics, Life, and Government.* By J. Hungerford Pollen, S.J. From the Fall of the Church to the Counter-Reformation, 1558-1580. (Longmans, 21s.)

if he tries to jump off he will only succeed in falling down.

Years ago there dwelt in a Scottish borough the mother of one of its Parliamentary members; a delightful old lady who dated from the "Disruption" of 1843. She kept on her drawing-room table a work, then of repute beyond the Tweed, called *The Ten Years' Conflict*, and one Saturday night a theological student, who was taking the services the next day, strolled up to the table, and laying hands on the volume, remarked in a staccato voice: "An excellent history, though, of course, written from the Free Church point of view." "Young man," broke out his indignant hostess, "whilst here you will do well to remember that *everything* in this house is looked at from the Free Church point of view."

Father Pollen's book begins with the accession to the Throne of Queen Elizabeth, and opens thus:

> When Elizabeth came to the throne she found herself face to face with the venerable Church which St. Augustine had founded close on a thousand years before, which had grown with the people and had become an integral part of the national life. The laws of the Church ranked with the laws of England, if not above them, for it was to Rome that the final appeals were made. Her Bishops were among the greatest lords of the land, and were then holding some of the highest offices under the Crown, while the Clergy governed and taxed themselves. The Church, moreover, derived still further power from her intimate communion with the other great Churches of Christendom, while the Pope, the common head of the Faithful, was in a special way her loving father and powerful protector. . . . Yet all was not well with that great body. . . . Five-and-twenty years before she had fallen with the fall of her King, and shameful had been the facility with which she had capitulated.

This is a fine and even appetising opening, and makes no disguise of its point of view. In Farm

Street everything is looked at from the Roman point of view, but if history be honestly written, whether it be of the "Disruption" of the Scottish Church in 1843, or of the process men call the "Elizabethan Settlement," the historian's personal point of view only adds zest to his narrative and emotion to his pen.

It would be impossible in a limited space to do justice to this book, and I will only try in a very cursory manner to set down some of the aspects of the exciting drama which Father Pollen exhibits in the course of his detailed narrative of twenty years.

And first must be named the demoralisation wrought throughout the land by the Tudor tyranny during the reigns of Henry, Mary, and Elizabeth. Henry dethroned the Pope, but continued to burn for heresy. Mary restored the Pope, and continued to burn for heresy. Elizabeth was excommunicated by the Pope, and hung as many priests as she could lay hands on for treason. Henry robbed the Church, and his devout daughter Mary confirmed the robbery, and quieted the thieves in their sacrilegious possessions. Elizabeth, not content with the loot of the old Church, levied heavy toll upon all that was left of the property of her new one. Absolutism in the realm of Faith and Morals and Ecclesiastical Law bore a sway as undisputed as it was disastrous. Henry destroyed the foundations of the old Church with a "*Hoc volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas*"; and Mary restored them, as Father Pollen says, "by an exercise of the same royal power which had previously abrogated it," and as for Elizabeth, she begins her reign with a proclamation forbidding all preaching, either by

Catholic or Protestant, "as the question of religion was to remain untouched until it was decided in Parliament," and what a Tudor Parliament was we do not need to be told.

Our author, naturally enough, is interested in the question: What was the religious feeling of the country in 1559? He thinks the great mass of the population, at all events outside London, was Catholic at heart—and who can doubt that in a kind of way vast numbers of honest folk still would have wished to cling to the service of the Mass and other ceremonies of the old religion? On rare occasions, not perhaps without instigation, these pious folk indicated their attachment to these old forms by overt acts of disorder. None the less, it is true, as Father Pollen not only admits but affirms, that indifference both in the ranks of the clergy and the laity prevailed:

> Nowhere now could you see Mass, nowhere sacraments, nowhere profession of Catholicity. The great Church had collapsed almost like a house of cards; and, saddest of all, the great mass of the clergy had allowed themselves to be impressed into the enemies' army. Unwilling but submissive, they read the schismatical homilies from the altar at which they prayed according to a rite which in their hearts they condemned. There is no getting away from the shame of this great defection (p. 39).

The same puzzle has lately arisen in the late Russian Revolution, where the Greek Church seems to have collapsed like another house of cards. Did the Russian *moujik* really care for "Holy Russia"?

However, as our author is soon able to point out, it is one thing to pull down a Church, to hang its priests, and forbid its Sacraments, and another to destroy it: and the melancholy that took

possession of the historian when viewing the "great defection" gives way to pride and emotion when it becomes his duty to recount the piety, zeal, and religious devotion of the various members of his great society who, at the cost of life and liberty, quickly began what is now called "the Counter-Reformation." None the less, the original puzzle remains tormenting the breast.

The second point our historian makes, to use a phrase of De Quincey's, "almost excruciatingly plain," is that, under Providence, we owe our Protestantism to Sir William Cecil. There were other men on the same side, and more strongly on the same side—Walsingham, Leicester, Nicholas Bacon—but Cecil's was the guiding hand, his was the brooding brain. Those of us who are still good Protestants ought not to forget this debt of obligation the next time we are disposed to be angry with what we may conceive to be some of the vagaries of living representatives of this still famous family.

Father Pollen, though he cannot but write of Cecil "as the instrument of ruin, the inventor of frauds, the agent of cruelty," seems glad to admit that Cecil was not "primarily cruel or fraudulent," and is able (p. 14) to say of him: "Everyone who had to do with Elizabeth and her Court knew that in an atmosphere of worldliness and insincerity, of avarice and baser vices, Cecil gave an example of religious and moral virtue, of humanity, moderate ambition, and general honesty." The worst thing, from the Roman Catholic point of view, that can be said against Cecil is that he was a heretic *sans phrase; pero hereje*, as the Spanish Ambassador

said of him when writing to Philip, and what is more, he was also a heretic who meant to win the game. And yet, not only had Cecil been baptised and educated in the old religion, but in Queen Mary's time he had conformed and communicated according to the old rites, and this, although he had done his best to oust both Mary and Elizabeth out of the succession in favour of a Protestant lady. How can one hope to fathom the mystery of the characters of this period? Father Pollen is apt to say, not only of Protestants but of Popes, that they were "the children of their times." This is true of all of us, everywhere and at all times. We cannot dispute the paternity, but, from the ethical "point of view," it is a pre-eminently unsatisfactory explanation and one which requires to be carefully handled by the orthodox.

Anyhow, whatever qualms Cecil may have felt when on his knees, yet as a statesman, a legislator, and an Englishman "dreaming of things to come" he fought Rome, *per fas et nefas*, and took his Queen—wayward, uncertain, carrying on ten years' flirtations with half a dozen Catholic suitors and herself half-Catholic at heart—along with him as he went. Terrible was the price he had to pay; he walked in crooked ways, he invented plots, he incited religious discords in Scotland and elsewhere, he witnessed cruelty and steeled his heart against torture, yet he never seems to have flinched, and, to use a vile, commercial phrase not wholly incongruous with the theme, he "got the goods delivered." Through all the shoals and shallows, as well as across a stormy sea, he steered the ship of State into a secure Protestant anchorage.

Father Pollen follows Cecil's devious tracks with the closest attention, and cannot at times restrain the admiration he feels, not only for his mastery of detail, and the calmness of his temper even when his authority over his royal mistress was challenged and gravely threatened, but for those rare qualities of foresight and insight, so conspicuously absent in the Popes of the period. It is, however, only fair to remember that Cecil was an Englishman on the spot, and the Popes were Italians in a city three months away.

Over these four Popes, though one of them has been canonised, even Farm Street can hardly help shaking a disappointed head. One was too sowl, another too quick, and all ill-informed as to the nature and temper of Englishmen.

There is the Bull of Excommunication, dated the 23rd of February, 1570, of Pope Pius V. What can be said in its favour? The first quality you demand in a writ is that it should *run*, and be capable of enforcement. This writ never ran a yard outside Italy, and there was neither Emperor nor King able or willing to execute it; and all that happened was that the poor fellow who bore the ominous name of Felton, and had the courage or effrontery to pin a copy to the Bishop of London's Palace in St. Paul's Churchyard, was clapt into the Tower, tortured, and put to death.

There is something splendid in the idea of a vicegerent of the Almighty on earth who can, on cause shown and strictly proved, pull down ill-conditioned kings and dispense their subjects from their oaths of allegiance. But then, the writs of these vicegerents must *run*, and the men who

serve them protected from ill-usage and gross contempt of Court.

As it turned out, this *brutum fulmen* of St. Pius, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the memory of the fires of Smithfield, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (which almost ranked with the Bible), the dread of a Catholic League to exterminate all Protestants, the plots to assassinate the Queen, and the crowning blow of the Armada, riveted Protestantism upon England, evoked the rival principle of nationality, and, after calling into existence that strangest and least religious of compounds "John Bullism," converted the toast of "Church, King, and Country" into a writ that really ran from Berwick-on-Tweed to the Land's End. There was surely a Nemesis in this, for was it not the Catholic Church that first strove to teach the English people the servile doctrines of the divine right of kings "to govern wrong," and of passive obedience to the Lord's anointed? But I must stop here, almost before I have begun, and without lighting a single candle at the shrine of Edmund Campion, the hero of the "Counter-Reformation."

THE NON-JURORS

1905

TO anyone blessed or cursed with an ironical humour the troublesome history of the Church of England since the Reformation cannot fail to be an endless source of delight. It really is exciting. Just a little more of Calvin and of Beza, half a dozen words here, or Cranmer's pencil through a single phrase elsewhere; a *quantum suff.* of the men "that allowed no Eucharistic sacrifice," and away must have gone beyond recall the possibility of the Laudian revival and all that still appertains thereunto. We must have lost the "primitive" men, the Kens, the Wilsons, the Knoxes, the Kebles, the Puseys. On the other hand, but for the unfaltering language of the Articles, the hearty tone of the Homilies, and the agreeable readiness of both sides to curse the Italian impudence of the Bishop of Rome and all his "detestable enormities," our Anglican Church history could never have been enriched with the names or sweetened by the memories of the Romaines, the Flavels, the Venns, the Simeons, and of many thousand unnamed saints who finished their course in the fervent faith of Evangelicalism.

But on what a thread it has always hung! An ill-considered Act of Parliament, an amendment hastily accepted by a pestered layman at midnight, a decision in a court of law, a Jerusalem

Bishopric, a passage in an early Father, an ancient heresy restudied, and off to Rome goes a Newman or a Manning, whilst a Baptist Noel finds his less romantic refuge in Protestant Dissent. Schism is for ever in the air. Disruption a lively possibility. It has always been a ticklish business belonging to the Church of England, unless you can muster up enough courage to be a frank Erastian, and on the rare occasions when you attend your parish church handle the Book of Common Prayer with all the reverence due to a schedule to an Act of Parliament.

Among the many noticeable humours of the present situation is the tone adopted by an average Churchman like Canon Overton to the Non-Jurors. When the late Mr. Lathbury published his admirable *History of the Non-Jurors*,[1] he had to prepare himself for a very different public of Churchmen and Churchwomen than will turn over Canon Overton's agreeable pages.[2] In 1845 the average Churchman, after he had conquered the serious initial difficulty of comprehending the Non-Juror's position, was only too apt to consider him a fool for his pains. "It has been the custom," wrote Mr. Lathbury, "to speak of the Non-Jurors as a set of unreasonable men, and should I succeed in any measure in correcting those erroneous impressions, I shall feel that my labour has not been in vain." But in 1902, as Canon Overton is ready enough to perceive, "their position is a little better understood." The well-nigh "fools" are all but "confessors."

[1] *A History of the Non-Jurors.* By Thomas Lathbury. London: Pickering, 1845.

[2] *The Non-Jurors.* By J. H. Overton, D.D. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1902, 16s.

The early history of the Non-Jurors is as fascinating and as fruitful as their later history is dull, melancholy, and disappointing.

Nobody will deny that the Bishops, clergy, and laity of the Church of England who refused to take the oaths to William and Mary and George I., when tendered to them, were amply justified in the Court of Conscience. They were ridiculed by the politicians of the day for their supersensitiveness; but what were they to do? If they took the oaths, they apostatised from the faith they had once professed.

Before the Revolution it was the faith of all High Churchmen—part of the *depositum* they had to guard—that the doctrine of non-resistance and passive obedience was Gospel truth, primitive doctrine, and a chief "characteristic" of the Anglican Church.

The saintly John Kettlewell, in his tractate, *Christianity: a Doctrine of the Cross, or Passive Obedience under any Pretended Invasion of Legal Rights and Liberties* (1696), makes this perfectly plain; and when Ken came to compose his famous will, wherein he declared that he died in the Communion of the Church of England, "as it adheres to the doctrine of the Cross," the good Bishop did not mean what many a pious soul in later days has been edified by thinking he did mean, the doctrine of the Atonement, but that of passive obedience, which was the Non-Juror's cross.

It is sad to think a doctrine dear to so many saintly men, maintained with an erudition so vast and exemplified by sacrifices so great, should have disappeared in the vortex of present-day conflict.

It may some day reappear in Convocation. Kettlewell, who was a precise writer and accurate thinker, defined sovereignty as supremacy. "Kings," he said, "can be no longer sovereigns, but subjects, if they have any superiors"; and he points out with much acumen that the best security under a sovereign "which sovereignty allows" is that the Kings and Ministers are accountable and liable for breach of law as well as others. Kettlewell, had he lived long enough, might have come to transfer his idea of sovereignty to Kings, Lords, and Commons speaking through an Act of Parliament, and if so, he would have urged *active obedience* to its enactments when not contrary to conscience, and *passive obedience* if they were so contrary. Therefore, were he alive to-day, and did he think it contrary to conscience (as he easily might) to pay a school-rate for an "undenominational" school, he would not draw a cheque for the amount, but neither would he punch the bailiff's head who came to seize his furniture. Kettlewell's treatise is well worth reading. Its last paragraph is most spirited.

There could be no doubt about it. The High Church party were bound hand and foot to the doctrine of the Cross—*i.e.*, passive obedience to the Lord's Anointed. Whoever else might actively resist or forsake the King, they could not without apostasy. But the Revolution of 1688 was not content to pierce the High Churchmen through one hand. Not only did the Revolution require the Church to forswear its King, but also to see its spiritual fathers deprived and intruders set in their places without even the semblance of any

spiritual authority. If it was hard to have James II. a fugitive in foreign lands and Dutch William in Whitehall, it was perhaps even harder to see Sancroft expelled from Lambeth, and the Erastian and latitudinarian Tillotson, who was prepared to sacrifice even episcopacy for peace, usurping the title of Archbishop of Canterbury. After all, no man, not even a Churchman, can serve two masters. The loyalty of a High Churchman to the throne is always subject to his loyalty to the Church, and at the Revolution he was wounded in both houses.

When Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne, and established what was then unblushingly called "the new religion," the whole Anglican Hierarchy, with the paltry exception of the Bishop of Llandaff, refused the oaths of supremacy, and were superseded. In a little more than a hundred years the Protestant Bench was bombarded with a heart-searching oath—this time of allegiance. Opinion was divided; the point was not so clear as in 1559. The Archbishop of York and his brethren of London, Lincoln, Bristol, Winchester, Rochester, Llandaff and St. Asaph, Carlisle and St. David's, swore to bear true allegiance to Their Majesties King William and Queen Mary. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of Bath and Wells, Ely, Gloucester, Norwich, Peterborough, Worcester, Chichester, and Chester refused to swear anything of the kind, and were consequently, in pursuance of the terms of an Act of Parliament, and of an Act of Parliament only, deprived of their ecclesiastical preferments. They thus became the first Non-Jurors, and were long, except two who died before actual sentence of exclusion,

affectionately known and piously venerated in all High Church homes as " the Deprived Fathers."

Who can doubt that they were right, holding the faith they did? Yet Englishmen do not take kindly to martyrdom, and some of the Bishops were strangely puzzled. The excellent Ken, who, like Keble, was an Englishman first and a Catholic afterwards (in other words, no true Catholic at all), when told that James was ready to give Ireland to France, as nearly as possible conformed, so angry was he with the Lord's Anointed; and even the fiery Leslie, one of our most agreeable writers, was always ready to forgive those pious, peaceful souls who thought it no sin, though great sorrow, to comply with the demands of Cæsar, but still managed to retain their old Church and King principles. Leslie reserved his wrath for the Tillotsons and the Tenisons and the Burnets, who first, to use his own words, swallowed " the morsels of usurpation " and then dressed them up " with all the gaudy and ridiculous flourishes that an Apostate eloquence can put upon them."

The early Non-Jurors included among their number a very large proportion of holy, learned, and primitive-minded men. At least four hundred of the general body of the clergy refused the oaths and accepted for themselves and those dependent on them lives of poverty and seclusion. They were from the beginning an unpopular body. They were not Puritans, they were not Deists, they were not Presbyterians, they would not go to their parish churches; and yet they vehemently objected to being called Papists. What troublesome people! Five of the deprived fathers, in-

cluding the Primate, had known what it was, when they defied their Sovereign, to be the idols of the mob; but when they adhered to his fallen cause they were deprived of their sees, and sent packing from their palaces without a single growl of popular discontent. Oblivion was their portion, even as it was of their Roman Catholic predecessors at the time of the Reformation.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, when turned out of Lambeth by a judgment of the Court of King's Bench to make way for Tillotson, retired to his native village of Fressingfield, where he did not attend the parish church, nor would allow any but non-juring clergy to perform Divine service in his presence. Dr. Sancroft (who was a book-lover, and had designed a binding of his own) died on November 24th, 1693, and the epitaph, of his own composition, on his tombstone may still be read with profit by time-servers of all degrees and denominations, cleric and lay, in Parliament and out of it. All the deprived Bishops, so Mr. Lathbury assures us, were in very narrow circumstances, and of Turner, of Ely, Mr. Lathbury very properly writes: "This man who, by adhering to the new Sovereign, and taking the oath, might have ended his day amidst an abundance of earthly blessings, was actually sustained in his declining years by the bounty of those who sympathised with him in his distresses." Bishop Turner died in 1700.

Despite this distressing and most genuine poverty, the reader of old books will not infrequently come across traces of many happy and well-spent hours during which these poor

Non-Jurors managed "to fleet the time" in their own society, for they were, many of them, men of the most varied tastes and endowed with Christian tempers; whilst their writings exhibit, as no other writings of the period do, the saintliness and devotion which are supposed to be among the "notes" of the Catholic Church. Two better men than Kettlewell and Dodwell are nowhere to be found, and as for vigorous writing, where is Charles Leslie to be matched?

So long as the deprived fathers continued to live, the schism—for complete schism it was between "the faithful remnant of the Church of England" and the Established Church—was on firm ground. But what was to happen when the last Bishop died? Dodwell, who, next to Hickes, seems to have dominated the non-juring mind, did not wish the schism to continue after the death of the deprived Bishops; for though he admitted that the prayers for the Revolution sovereigns would be "unlawful prayers," to which assent could not properly be given, he still thought that communion with the Church of England was possible. Hickes thought otherwise, and Hickes, it must not be forgotten, though only known to the world and even to Non-Jurors generally, as the deprived Dean of Worcester, was in sober truth and reality Bishop of Thetford, having been consecrated a Suffragan Bishop under that title by the deprived Bishops of Norwich, Peterborough, and Ely, at Southgate, in Middlesex, on February 24th, 1693, in the Bishop of Peterborough's lodgings. At the same time the accomplished Thomas Wagstaffe was consecrated Suffragan Bishop of

Ipswich, though he continued to earn his living as a physician all the rest of his days.

These were clandestine consecrations, for even so well-tried and whole-hearted a Non-Juror as Thomas Hearne, of Oxford, knew nothing about them, though a great friend of both the new Bishops, until long years had sped. It would be idle at this distance of time, and having regard to the events which have happened since February, 1693, to consider the nice questions how far the Act of Henry VIII. relating to the appointment of suffragans could have any applicability to such consecrations, or what degree of episcopal authority was thereby conferred, or for how long.

As things turned out, Ken proved the longest liver of the deprived fathers. The good Bishop died at Longleat, one of the few great houses which sheltered Non-Jurors, on March 19th, 1711. But before his death he had made cession of his rights to his friend Hooper, who on the violent death of Kidder, the intruding revolution Bishop, had been appointed by Queen Anne, who had wished to reinstate Ken, to Bath and Wells. It was the wish of Ken that the schism should come to an end on his death.

It did nothing of the kind, though some very leading Non-Jurors, including the learned Dodwell and Nelson, rejoined the main body of the Church, saving all just exceptions to the "unlawful prayers."

Bishop Wagstaffe died in 1712, leaving Bishop Hickes alone in his glory, who in 1713, assisted by two Scottish Bishops, consecrated Jeremy Collier, Samuel Hawes, and Nathaniel Spinckes, Bishops

of "the faithful remnant." Hickes died in 1715, and the following year the great and hugely learned Thomas Brett became a Bishop, as also did Henry Gawdy.

Then, alas! arose a schism which rent the faithful remnant in twain. It was about a great subject, the Communion Service. Collier and Brett were in favour of altering the Book of Common Prayer so as to restore it to the First Book of King Edward VI., which provided for (1) the mixed chalice; (2) prayers for the faithful departed; (3) prayer for the descent of the Holy Ghost on the consecrated elements; (4) the Oblatory Prayer, offering the elements to the Father as symbols of His Son's body and blood. This side of the controversy became known as "The Usagers," whilst those Non-Jurors, headed by Bishop Spinckes, who held by King Charles's Prayer-Book, were called "the Non-Usagers." The discussion lasted long, and was distinguished by immense learning and acumen.

The Usagers may be said to have carried the day, for after the controversy had lasted fourteen years, in 1731 Timothy Mawman was consecrated a Bishop by three Bishops, two of whom were "Usagers" and one a "Non-Usager." But in the meantime what had become of the congregations committed to their charge? Never large, they had dwindled almost entirely away.

The last regular Bishop was Robert Gordon, who was consecrated in 1741 by Brett, Smith, and Mawman. Gordon, who was an out-and-out Jacobite, died in 1779.

I have not even mentioned the name of perhaps the greatest of the Non-Jurors, William Law, nor

that of Carte, an historian, the fruits of whose labour may still be seen in other men's orchards.

The whole story, were it properly told, would prove how hard it is in a country like England, where nobody really cares about such things, to run a schism. But who knows what may happen to-morrow?

THE VIA MEDIA

1884

THE world is governed by logic. Truth as well as Providence is always on the side of the strongest battalions. An illogical opinion only requires rope enough to hang itself.

Middle men may often seem to be earning for themselves a place in Universal Biography, and middle positions frequently seem to afford the final solution of vexed questions; but this double delusion seldom outlives a generation. The world wearies of the men, for, attractive as their characters may be, they are for ever telling us, generally at great length, how it comes about that they stand just where they do, and we soon tire of explanations and forget apologists. The positions, too, once hailed with such acclaim, so eagerly recognised as the true refuges for poor mortals anxious to avoid being run over by fast-driving logicians, how untenable do they soon appear! how quickly do they grow antiquated! how completely they are forgotten!

The Via Media, alluring as is its direction, imposing as are its portals, is, after all, only what Londoners call a blind alley, leading nowhere.

Ratiocination [says one of the most eloquent and yet exact of modern writers [1]] is the great principle of order in thinking: it reduces a chaos into harmony, it catalogues the accumulations of knowledge; it maps out for us the relations

Dr. Newman in the *Grammar of Assent*.

of its separate departments. It enables the independent intellects of many acting and re-acting on each other to bring their collective force to bear upon the same subject-matter. If language is an inestimable gift to man, the logical faculty prepares it for our use. Though it does not go so far as to ascertain truth; still, it teaches us the *direction* in which truth lies, and *how propositions lie towards each other.* Nor is it a slight benefit to know what is needed for the proof of a point, what is wanting in a theory, how a theory hangs together, *and what will follow if it be admitted.*

This great principle ot order in thinking is what we are too apt to forget. "Give us," cry many, "safety in our opinions, and let who will be logical. An Englishman's creed is compromise. His *bête noire* extravagance. We are not saved by syllogism." Possibly not; but yet there can be no safety in an illogical position, and one's chances of snug quarters in eternity cannot surely be bettered by our believing at one and the same moment of time self-contradictory propositions.

But, talk as we may, for the bulk of mankind it will doubtless always remain true that a truth does not exclude its contradictory. Darwin and Moses are both right. Between the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to Matthew Arnold there is no difference.

If the too apparent absurdity of this is pressed home, the baffled illogician, persecuted in one position, flees into another, and may be heard assuring his tormentor that in a period like the present, which is so notoriously transitional, a logician is as much out of place as a bull in a china shop, and that unless he is quiet, and keeps his tail well wrapped round his legs, the mischief he will do to his neighbours' china creeds and delicate porcelain opinions is shocking to contemplate.

But this excuse is no longer admissible. The age has remained transitional so unconscionably long, that we cannot consent to forgo the use of logic any longer. For a decade or two it was all well enough, but when it comes to four-score years, one's patience gets exhausted. Carlyle's celebrated essay, *Characteristics*, in which this transitional period is diagnosed with unrivalled acumen, is half a century old. Men have been born in it—have grown old in it—have died in it. It has outlived the old Court of Chancery. It is high time the spurs of logic were applied to its broken-winded sides.

Notwithstanding the obstinate preference the "bulk of mankind" always show for demonstrable errors over undeniable truths, the number of persons is daily increasing who have begun to put a value upon mental coherency and to appreciate the charm of a logical position.

It was common talk at one time to express astonishment at the extending influence of the Church of Rome, and to wonder how people who went about unaccompanied by keepers could submit their reason to the Papacy, with her open rupture with science and her evil historical reputation. From astonishment to contempt is but a step. We first open wide our eyes and then our mouths.

> Lord So-and-so, his coat bedropt with wax,
> All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
> Brave with the needlework of Noodledom,
> Believes—who wonders and who cares?

It used to be thought a sufficient explanation to say either that the man was an ass or that it was

all those Ritualists. But gradually it became apparent that the pervert was not always an ass, and that the Ritualists had nothing whatever to do with it. If a man's tastes run in the direction of Gothic architecture, free seats, daily services, frequent communions, lighted candles and Church millinery, they can all be gratified, not to say glutted, in the Church of his baptism.

It is not the Roman ritual, however splendid, nor her ceremonial, however spiritually significant, nor her system of doctrine, as well arranged as Roman law and as subtle as Greek philosophy, that makes Romanists nowadays.

It is when a person of religious spirit and strong convictions as to the truth and importance of certain dogmas—few in number it may be; perhaps only one, the Being of God—first becomes fully alive to the tendency and direction of the most active opinions of the day; when, his alarm quickening his insight, he reads as it were between the lines of books, magazines and newspapers; when, struck with a sudden trepidation, he asks, "Where is this to stop? how can I, to the extent of a poor ability, help to stem this tide of opinion which daily increases its volume and floods new territory?"—then it is that the Church of Rome stretches out her arms and seems to say, "Quarrel not with your destiny, which is to become a Catholic. You may see difficulties and you may have doubts. They abound everywhere. You will never get rid of them. But I, and I alone, have never coquetted with the spirit of the age. I, and I alone, have never submitted my creeds to be overhauled by infidels. Join me, acknowledge my

authority, and you need dread no side attack and fear no charge of inconsistency. Succeed finally I must, but even were I to fail, yours would be the satisfaction of knowing that you had never held an opinion, used an argument, or said a word, that could fairly have served the purpose of your triumphant enemy."

At such a crisis as this in a man's life he does not ask himself, How little can I believe? With how few miracles can I get off?—he demands sound armour, sharp weapons, and, above all, firm ground to stand on—a good footing for his faith—and these he is apt to fancy he can get from Rome alone.

No doubt he has to pay for them, but the charm of the Church of Rome is this: when you have paid her price you get your goods—a neat assortment of coherent, interdependent, logical opinions.

It is not much use, under such circumstances, to call the convert a coward, and facetiously to inquire of him what he really thinks about St. Januarius. Nobody ever began with Januarius. I have no doubt a good many Romanists would be glad to be quit of him. He is part of the price they have to pay in order that their title to the possession of other miracles may be quieted. If you can convince the convert that he can disbelieve Januarius of Naples without losing his grip of Paul of Tarsus, you will be well employed; but if you begin with merry gibes, and end with contemptuously demanding that he should have done with such nonsense and fling the rubbish overboard, he will draw in his horns and perhaps, if he knows his Browning, murmur to himself:

To such a process, I discern no end.
Cutting off one excrescence to see two;
There is ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife. I cut and cut again;
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God Himself?

To suppose that no person is logically entitled to fear God and to ridicule Januarius at the same time is doubtless extravagant, but to do so requires care. There is an "order in thinking. We must consider how propositions lie towards each other —how a theory hangs together, and what will follow if it be admitted."

It is eminently desirable that we should consider the logical termini of our opinions. Travelling up to town last month from the West, a gentleman got into my carriage at Swindon, who, as we moved off and began to rush through the country, became unable to restrain his delight at our speed. His face shone with pride, as if he were pulling us himself. "What a charming train!" he exclaimed. "This is the pace I like to travel at." I indicated assent. Shortly afterwards, when our windows rattled as we rushed through Reading, he let one of them down in a hurry, and cried out in consternation, "Why, I want to get out here." "Charming train," I observed. "Just the pace I like to travel at; but it *is* awkward if you want to go anywhere except Paddington." My companion made no reply; his face ceased to shine, and as he sat whizzing past his dinner, I mentally compared his recent exultation with that of those who in the present day extol much of its spirit, use many of its arguments and partake in most of its triumphs, in utter ignorance as to whitherwards it is all tending as

surely as the Great Western rails run into Paddington. "Poor victims!" said a distinguished Divine, addressing the Evangelicals, then rejoicing over their one legal victory, the "Gorham Case"; "do you dream that the spirit of the age is working for you, or are you secretly prepared to go further than you avow?"

Mr. Matthew Arnold's friends, the Nonconformists, are as a rule nowadays bad logicians. What Dr. Newman has said of the Tractarians is (with but a verbal alteration) also true of a great many Nonconformists:

> Moreover, there are those among them who have very little grasp of principle, even from the natural temper of their minds. They see this thing is beautiful, and that is in the Fathers, and a third is expedient, and a fourth pious; but of their connection one with another, their hidden essence and their life, and the bearing of external matters upon each and upon all, they have no perception or even suspicion. They do not look at things as part of a whole, and often will sacrifice the most important and precious portions of their creed, or make irremediable concessions in word or in deed, from mere simplicity and want of apprehension.

We have heard of grown-up Baptists asked to become, and actually becoming, godfathers and godmothers to Episcopalian babies! What terrible confusion is here! A point is thought to be of sufficient importance to justify separation on account of it from the whole Christian Church, and yet not to be of importance enough to debar the separatist from taking part in a ceremony whose sole significance is that it gives the lie direct to the point of separation.

But we all of us—Churchmen and Dissenters alike—select our opinions far too much in the same fashion as ladies are reported, I dare say

quite falsely, to do their afternoon's shopping—this thing because it is so pretty, and that thing because it is so cheap. We pick and choose, take and leave, approbate and reprobate in a breath. A familiar anecdote is never out of place: An English captain, anxious to conciliate a savage king, sent him on shore, for his own royal wear, an entire dress-suit. His majesty was graciously pleased to accept the gift, and as it never occurred to the royal mind that he could, by any possibility, wear all the things himself, with kingly generosity he distributed what he did not want amongst his Court. This done, he sent for the donor to thank him in person. As the captain walked up the beach, his majesty advanced to meet him, looking every inch a king in the sober dignity of a dress-coat. The waistcoat imparted an air of pensive melancholy that mightily became the Prime Minister, whilst the Lord Chamberlain, as he skipped to and fro in his white gloves, looked a courtier indeed. The trousers had become the subject of an unfortunate dispute, in the course of which they had sustained such injuries as to be hardly recognisable. The captain was convulsed with laughter.

But, in truth, the mental toilet of most of us is as defective and almost as risible as was that of this savage Court. We take on our opinions without paying heed to conclusions, and the result is absurd. Better be without any opinions at all. A naked savage is not necessarily an undignified object; but a savage in a dress-coat and nothing else is, and must ever remain, a mockery and a show. There is a great relativity about a dress-suit.

In the language of the logicians, the name of each article not only denotes that particular, but connotes all the rest. Hence it came about that that which, when worn in its entirety, is so dull and decorous, became so provocative of Homeric laughter when distributed amongst several wearers.

No person with the least tincture of taste can ever weary of Dr. Newman, and no apology is therefore offered for another quotation from his pages. In his story, *Loss and Gain*, he makes one of his characters, who has just become a Catholic, thus refer to the stock Anglican divines, a class of writers who are, at all events, immensely superior to the Ellicotts and Farrars of these latter days: "I am embracing that creed which upholds the divinity of tradition with Laud, consent of Fathers with Beveridge, a visible Church with Bramhall, dogma with Bull, the authority of the Pope with Thorndyke, penance with Taylor, prayers for the dead with Ussher, celibacy, asceticism, ecclesiastical discipline with Bingham." What is this to say but that, according to the Cardinal, our great English divines have divided the Roman dress-suit amongst themselves?

This particular charge may perhaps be untrue, but with that I am not concerned. If it is not true of them, it is true of somebody else. "That is satisfactory so far as Mr. Lydgate is concerned," says Mrs. Farebrother in *Middlemarch* with an air of precision; "but as to Bulstrode, the report may be true of some other son."

We must all be acquainted with the reckless way in which people pluck opinions like flowers—a bud here and a leaf there. The bouquet is pretty

to-day, but you must look for it to-morrow in the oven.

There is a sense in which it is quite true what our other Cardinal has said about Ultramontanes, Anglicans, and Orthodox Dissenters all being in the same boat. They all of them enthrone Opinion, holding it to be, when encased in certain dogmas, Truth Absolute. Consequently they have all their martyrologies—the bright roll-call of those who have defied Cæsar even unto death, or at all events gaol. They all, therefore, put something above the State, and apply tests other than those recognised in our law courts.

The precise way by which they come at their opinions is only detail. Be it an infallible Church, an infallible Book, or an inward spiritual grace, the outcome is the same. The Romanist, of course, has to bear the first brunt, and is the most obnoxious to the State; but he must be slow of comprehension and void of imagination who cannot conceive of circumstances arising in this country when the State should assert it to be its duty to violate what even Protestants believe to be the moral law of God. Therefore, in opposing Ultramontanism, as it surely ought to be opposed, care ought to be taken by those who are not prepared to go all lengths with Cæsar, to select their weapons of attack, not from his armoury, but from their own.

How ridiculous it is to see some estimable man who subscribes to the Bible Society, and takes what he calls "a warm interest" in the heathen, chuckling over some scoffing article in a newspaper—say about a Church Congress—and never perceiving, so unaccustomed is he to examine

directions, that he is all the time laughing at his own folly! Aunt Nesbit, in *Dred*, considered Gibbon a very pious writer. "I am sure," says she "he makes the most religious reflections all along. I liked him particularly on that account." This poor lady had some excuse. A vein of irony like Gibbon's is not struck upon every day; but readers of newspapers, when they laugh, ought to be able to perceive what it is they are laughing at.

Logic is the prime necessity of the hour. Decomposition and transformation is going on all around us, but far too slowly. Some opinions, bold and erect as they may still stand, are in reality but empty shells. One shove would be fatal. Why is it not given?

The world is full of doleful creatures, who move about demanding our sympathy. I have nothing to offer them but doses of logic, and stern commands to move on or fall back. Catholics in distress about Infallibility; Protestants devoting themselves to the dismal task of paring down the dimensions of this miracle, and reducing the credibility of that one—as if any appreciable relief from the burden of faith could be so obtained; sentimental sceptics, who, after labouring to demolish what they call the chimera of superstition, fall to weeping as they remember they have now no lies to teach their children; democrats who are frightened at the rough voice of the people, and aristocrats flirting with democracy. Logic, if it cannot cure, might at least silence these gentry.

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